

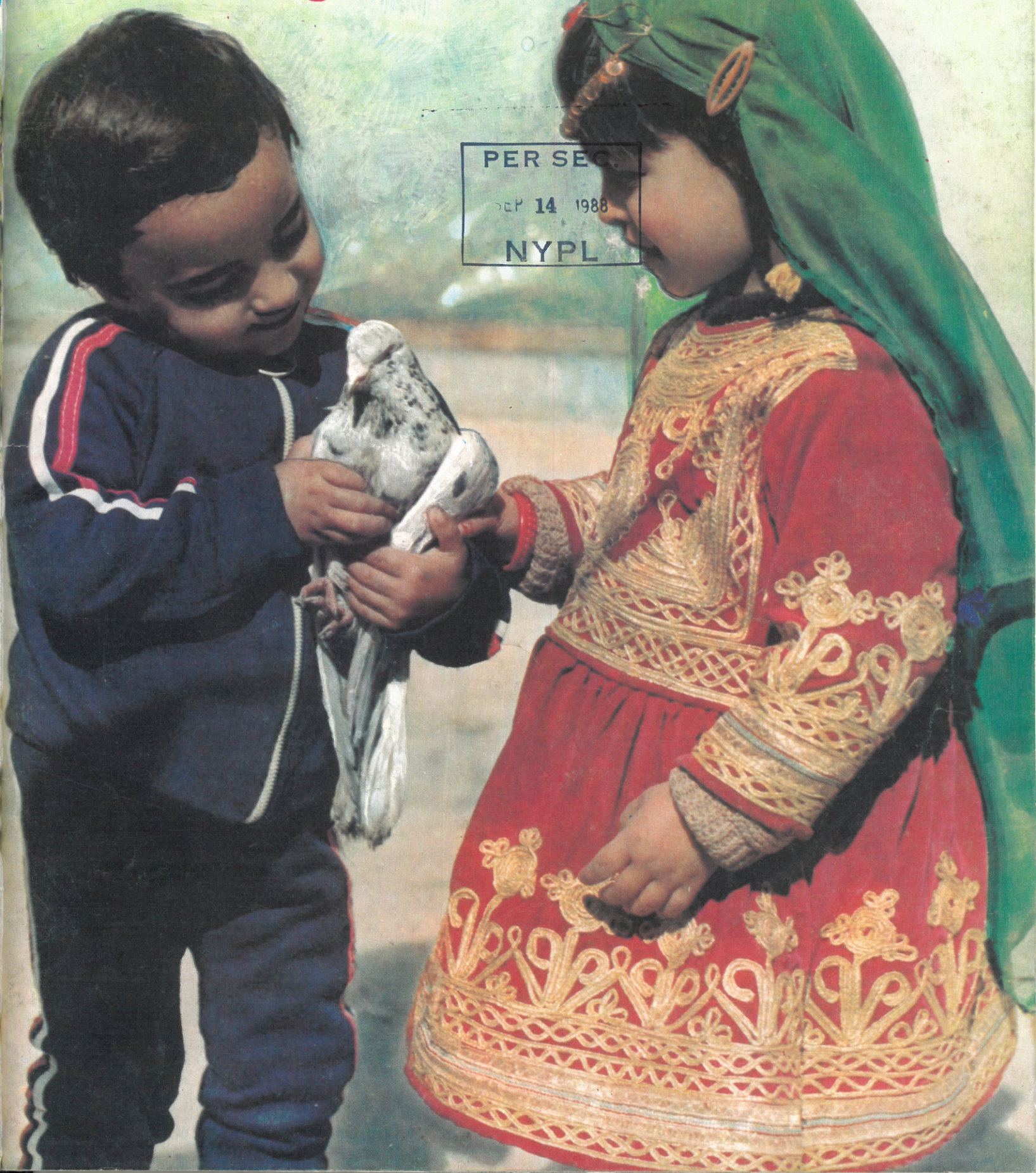
# ATTACK 3 **AFGHANISTAN** **Today**

Jan.-Feb. 1988 No. 1

PER SEC.

SEP 14 1988

NYPL









# AFGHANISTAN Today

BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE, SOLIDARITY  
AND FRIENDSHIP ORGANIZATION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

Published in English under the supervision of the Editorial Board

Acting Editor-in-Chief  
Mohammad Qabool

Executive Secretary  
A. Shukoor Satarzai

English Editor  
Zarina Majid

Photographer  
M. Anwar Safdari

For subscription apply to:  
Afghanistan Today,  
Block 106, Ansari Wat,  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
Phone: 61868, 62022

Our account No 5831/9  
Da Afghanistan Bank,  
Kabul, Afghanistan

Price: Home — 50 Afs a copy  
250 Afs yearly  
Abroad — 2 US dollars a copy  
10 US dollars yearly

Signed for printing 8.01.88

Left: People support the results of  
the Second PDPA Conference.  
During the meeting at Kabul  
Stadium



Peace is the best New  
Year promise to children

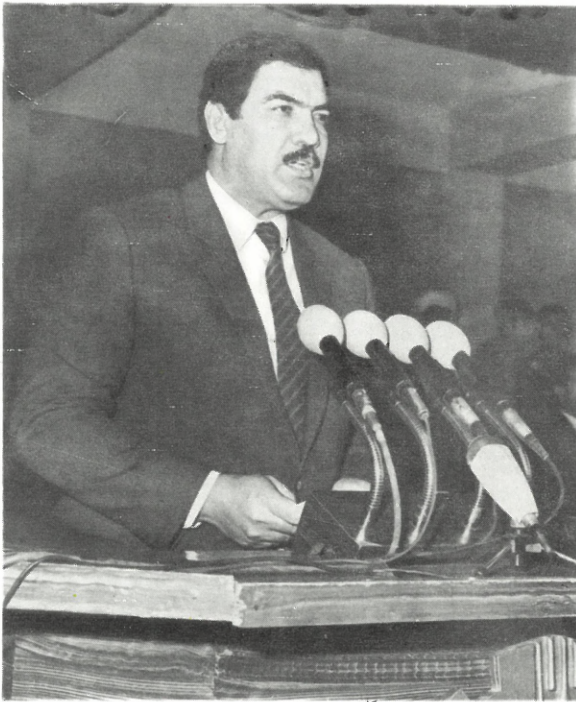


Afghanistan: Disturbed  
roads, devoted guards

## IN THIS ISSUE

	A Landmark in PDPA History	2
PANORAMA	A Holiday	4
NATIONAL ECONOMY	Electricity for People	6
YOUTH	Friendship Constructs	8
BUSINESS	"Cam" Means Enjoyment	10
PLACE TO VISIT	Badghis: Land of Legends	12
SOCIAL WELFARE	Central Polyclinic	18
	Free Lunch for All	19
	Kodakestan — Land of Children	20
FOLKLORE	Alchemist's Stone	22
PEOPLE'S CULTURE	Life Dedicated to Art	26
	Preserving Past for Future	28
	Afghan Cinema: Past and Present	32





Dr. Najibullah, General Secretary of the PDPA CC, President of Afghanistan



## A LANDMARK IN PDPA HISTORY

**The Second National PDPA Conference was held in Kabul on October 18—20, 1987. As its main issue, the conference discussed the policy of national reconciliation and the party's tasks in further acceleration of its process, because all related issues, in one way or another, depend on the solution of this crucial problem. The conference also pointed out that the Afghan people as well as the sober-minded opposition forces now understand even better than before that it is impossible to solve the present pressing questions by means of force, and that it is not only immoral and criminal, but senseless. There is only one way out — national accord and constructive dialogue.**

Expressing firm and all-out support to national reconciliation, the conference reiterated that the accumulated experience, as the wealth of the entire party, should be further enriched and acquire new dimensions.

The conference also pointed out that the present is only the first stage of the process of national reconciliation. At this stage, the party set forth the very idea of national reconciliation, became its militant organizer and the guiding force for its practical implementation. This policy has now become a reality with concrete

dimensions, it is becoming the political practice of the majority of the Afghan people, though it entails great difficulties, complications of the situation in the country and even aggravation of contradictions in some spheres of life of the society.

Presenting a critical and objective assessment of the first stage of the programme of national reconciliation during the previous ten months, the conference came to the conclusion that the programme has acquired a concrete feature and manifestation in the practical day-to-day political activities of the people. In order to further enhance this humane process and give it an irreversible character, the National PDPA Conference defined the tasks and goals of the second stage of national reconciliation. These tasks can be summed up as follows:

- establishment of the left-democratic alliance and the mechanism of cooperation with various parties;
- formation of coalition organs of state power and administration, including coalition government;
- approval of the Constitution and election of the President and National Council;
- provision of facilities for the immediate return of all refugees;
- elevation of the effectiveness of all peaceful activities and consistent publicizing of the ideas of national reconciliation;
- acceleration of the growth of national economy and solution of social tasks.

The delegates to the Second National PDPA Conference



Thus, the Second National PDPA Conference called for consistent, responsible and purposeful work for the realization of the sacred cause of peace, accord and reconciliation in Afghanistan. National reconciliation, in turn, presupposes the formation of a new political system, having a multi-faceted and coalition character. Such a system can, and should, reflect the interests of all national, democratic and patriotic forces as well as all those who renounce a military solution of differences and give up the cult of violence.

Coalition organs of State power and administration, based on sharing power, should provide a proper forum for all national-patriotic forces, and representatives of the latter should take active part in running state affairs. Therefore, the new political system, based on democratic legality and lawfulness, will be transformed into a historic achievement of the revolution, party and the people and will assist, in turn, the consolidation of national peace.

Many forms of coalition administration have already been worked out, and are being put into practice. These forms include election of thousands of representatives of opposition forces to local jirgahs (councils), inclusion of over 6 thousand former opponents to the state and repatriates to commissions for national reconciliation, election of several hundreds of former ringleaders of armed anti-government groupings as heads of a number of sub-districts, districts and provinces, siding with the state by villages and sub-districts that preserve their own forms of administration, participation of representatives of opposition forces in different large meetings and gatherings (for example, in the National Jirgah of Hazaras, held in October, 1987, over 400 insurgents took part, that was almost half of the entire number of the participants).

The conference has also stated that the process of national reconciliation is irreversible.

Five years after the First Conference, the Second National PDPA Conference was to decide such vital issues of party life, as consolidation of party unity, introduction of amendments to the Rules of the Party and adoption of a new Programme of Action of the PDPA. Besides, the conference analysed in detail other pressing issues, such as the outcome of the public debate on the draft Constitution, preparations for the convocation of the 2nd PDPA Congress and celebrations of the forthcoming 10th anniversary of the April Revolution as well as other key issues concerning further socio-economic development of Afghanistan.

The conference also took note of the great attention that had been paid to the process of public discussion of the New Draft Constitution. It was mentioned that over 2 million citizens of the country had taken part in this discussion. The Constitution Drafting Commission had received around 15 thousand proposals and notices. All these testify to the fact that this Constitution is the Constitution of the People, the Constitution of Peace, Happiness and Progress.

It was pointed out during the discussions at the conference that it had been a historically-justified outcome that the PDPA turned out to be the only political force capable of leading the nation towards a better future, that carried out the national-democratic revolution in the interest of the people, and it is also in the interest of the people that the party exerts all efforts in trying to find a way out of the war and bloodshed, and create a truly representative socio-political system of peace and creativity in the country.

This, in its turn, demands the consolidation of the party and strengthening unity among its ranks. Towards this end must serve the changes in the Programme of Action of the PDPA and amendments to its Rules adopted by the conference. At the same time, in the new documents some statements were removed that forestalled events, outstripped time. The inner structure of the party has also been revised.



The conference also discussed questions pertaining to the struggle against bureaucracy, improvement of its style of working as well as forms and methods of party's activities. Special attention was paid to the necessity of uprooting factionism and groupism inside the party which still exist as a result of insufficient knowledge and comprehension by party members, and even some leading cadres of scientific revolutionary theory, and thus instability of their ideological position.

Concerning international developments, the PDPA National Conference reiterated, on the *fait accompli*, that the proclamation of the policy of national reconciliation stepped up the credibility and prestige of the PDPA and the State of Afghanistan in the international arena. National reconciliation, which fully conforms to the pressing need of time for peace and international security, has opened up new vistas for strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations of the PDPA and the state with peace-loving parties, movements, states and governmental as well as non-governmental international organizations.

Today, the PDPA has established relations with 153 political parties and concluded protocols of cooperation with 81 of them. At present, the Republic of Afghanistan has diplomatic relations with over 80 countries of the world.

The Second National PDPA Conference opened a new chapter in the 23-year-long history of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. The realization of the decisions of the conference will definitely reinvigorate the activities of all party committees, activists and rank and file in accelerating the process of national reconciliation.

Further implementation of the decisions adopted by the conference will serve further consolidation of the role of the party as a leading political force in achieving national peace, and a powerful factor for its preservation in the future. Common interest in peace defines the aims and essence of the political system being created in Afghan society.

As to the PDPA, Dr. Najibullah stated in his report at the conference, "It does not give up and will not give up power; it gives up only the monopoly on power in order to make it more representative and broad in its composition."

During an interval between the sessions of the conference



Why rush?  
Not to waste  
leisure time?



Shopping on  
holiday —  
better than  
just sitting at  
home

PANORAMA

# A HOLIDAY







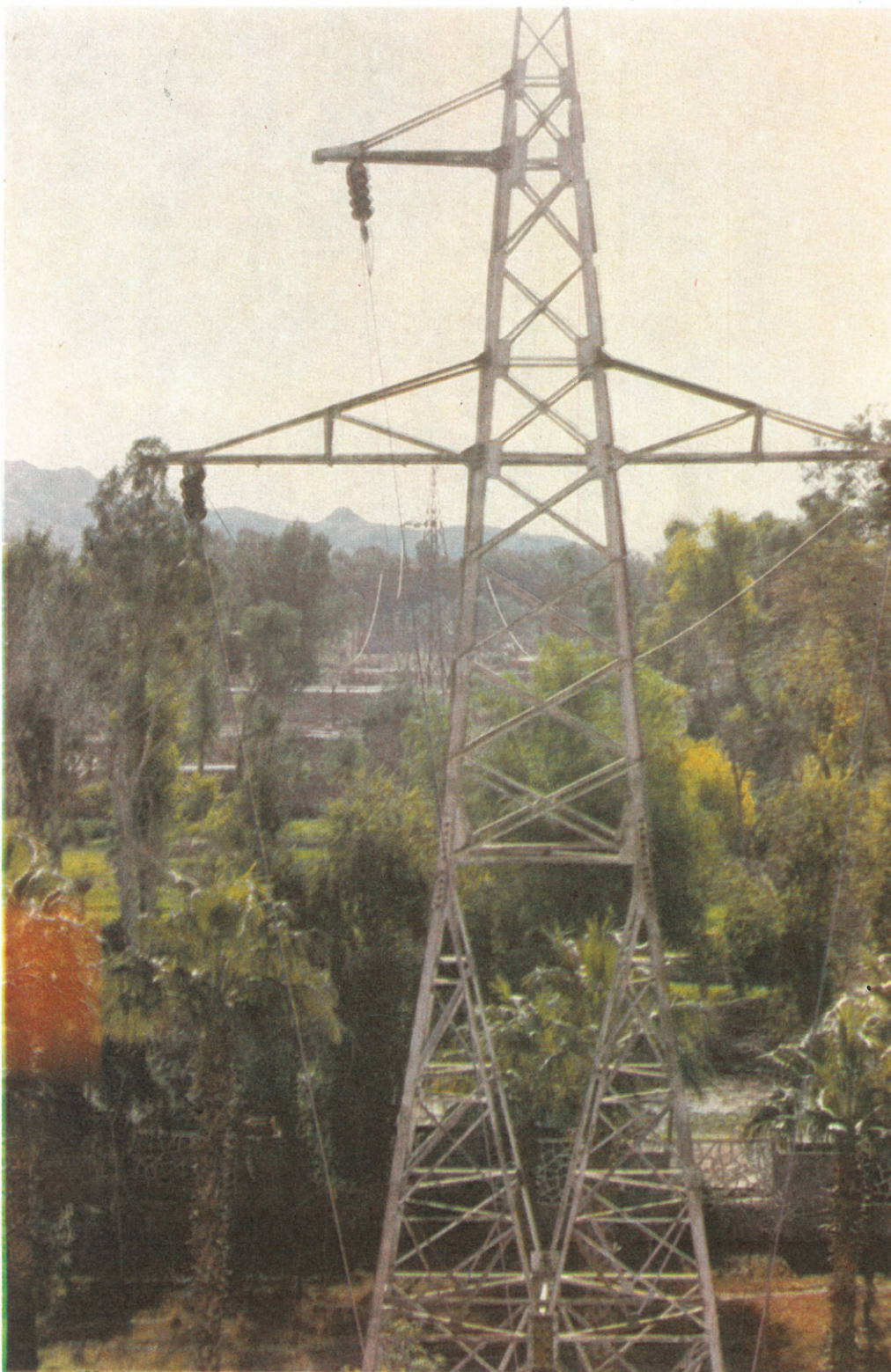
Happiness in  
Bagh-e-Bala  
park of Kabul  
city

Exciting  
match of  
*Buzkashi*

*Naghma* and  
*Mangal*, po-  
pular duet  
of Afghan  
music







High-voltage electricity transmission line in Nangarhar province

NATIONAL ECONOMY

# ELECTRICITY FOR PEOPLE

As an important economic factor, electric power plays a significant role in socio-economic development of basic industries, such as chemical, metal-working and agro-industries. Raising the standard of living of the people also depends greatly on cheap and ensured power supply.

The first electric power station was built in Kabul in 1893 for the King's palace with power for 40 lamps. In 1911 a new steam power station was built in the King's summer residence in Jalalabad with a capacity of 19 kilowatt (KW). A 15-KW electric generator was installed on the Panjshir river in 1920. There were no motor transport vehicles at that time; so elephants were used for transporting and construction work. During the period 1923—1951, many electric stations were constructed in Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Herat, Kunduz, Wardak and Baghlan provinces. Research work on utilizing the Kabul River power resources began later. A contract was signed for big construction work in the area of the Helmand River for its multi-purpose utilization, for power generation and for irrigation.

Electric power generation in Afghanistan at that time was in the hand of several private companies operating isolated systems. This state of affairs existed until the formation of *Da Afghanistan Breshna Moassessa* (DABM), a government enterprise, in 1966. DABM's charter makes the agency responsible for construction and operation of power stations, as well as for generation, transmission and distribution of power throughout the country.

Of special importance was the assistance of the Soviet Union in developing the state system of power-stations. In 1963 the second phase of hydro-electro power-station of Puli-Khumri with a capacity of 9 megawatts (MW) and, in 1966, the power-station of Darunta with a capacity of 11.5 MW and in 1967 the biggest station of the country, that is, Naghlu hydro-power station, with a capacity of 100 MW, were built with the assistance of the friendly Soviet Union.

At present, Afghanistan has power-stations operating in isolation. The country has several generation and transmission facilities not yet connected by a national grid. The Afghan Electricity Authority divides the country into eight administrative regions, called *Breshnas*. In general, each region has one or two major load centres and several minor ones.

The present annual power consumption is about 70 KW per capita. The main bulk of the power generation is from harnessing water resources. There are isolated diesel genera-



ting units for cities not connected with hydro-electric power transmission network. Some other cities have gas or oil-fired thermal units.

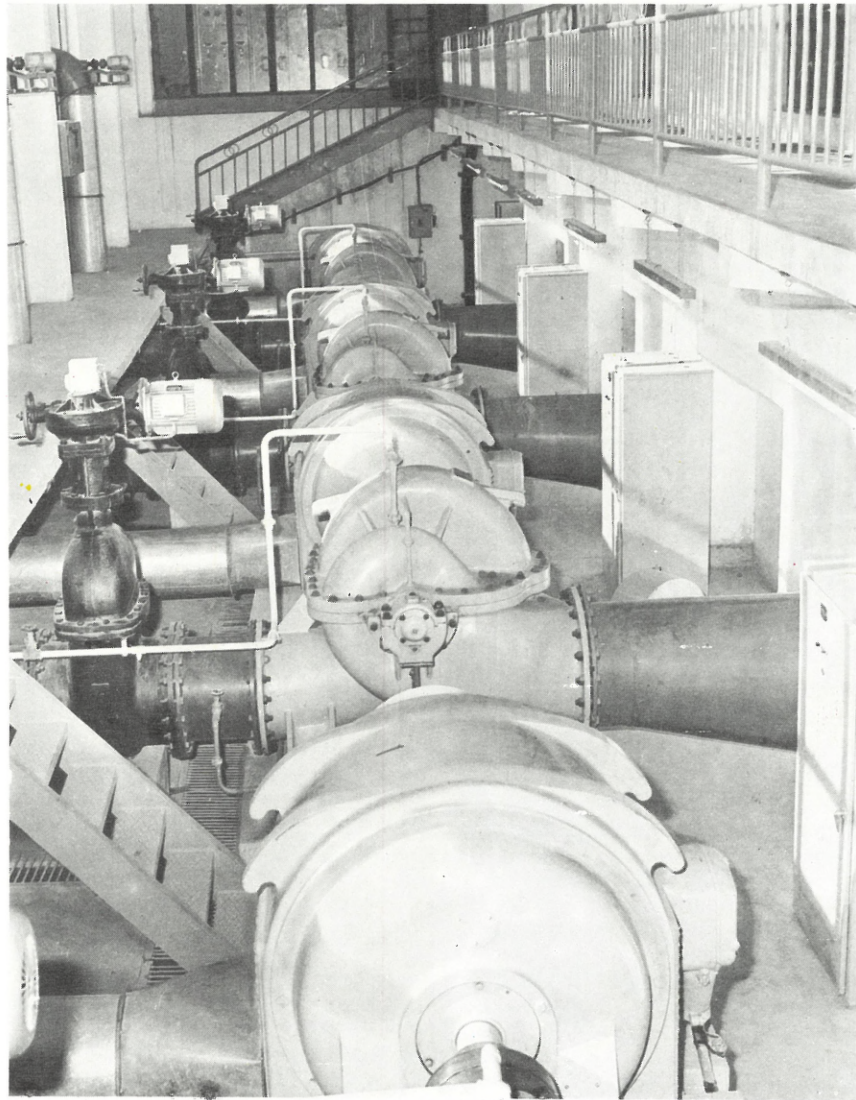
The existing installed capacity in the country is about 474 MW, of which hydro-power stations account for 261 MW, thermal power stations 158 MW and diesel power-stations 55 MW. Their total production for 1987 was about 1,365 million KWh. This production could not satisfy the increasing demands of the consumers.

This branch has been greatly damaged through the undeclared war waged by world imperialism. Many stations, buildings, machinery and transmission lines have been destroyed. From 1978 to 1986 it sustained a loss of about three billion Afghanis.

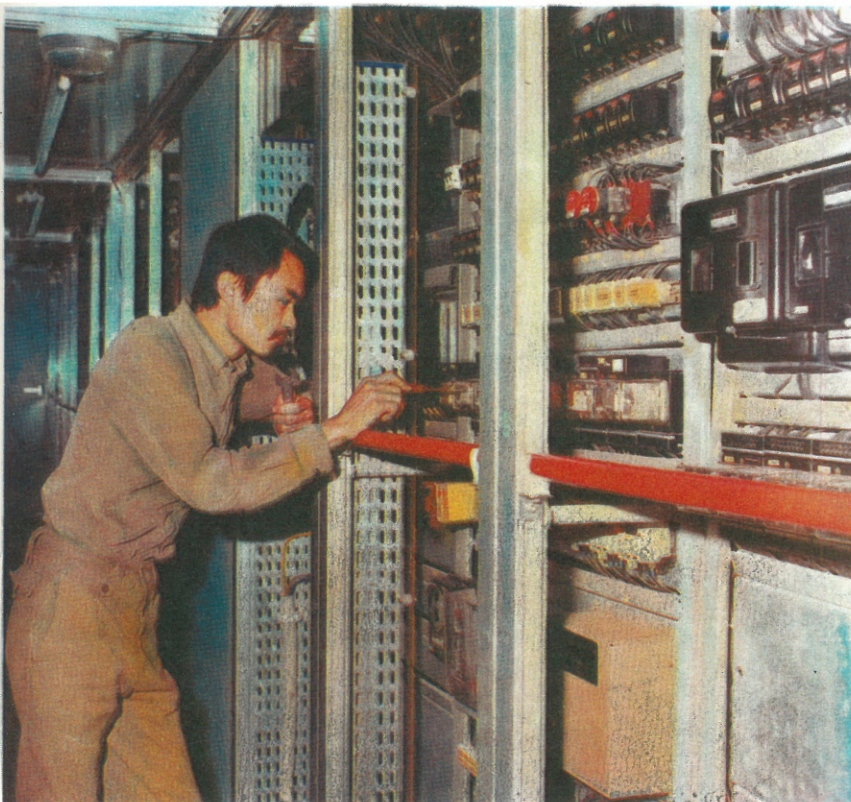
Hydro-electric power has a number of desirable attributes. It is a renewable resource with a relatively large component of local input in its development, and promising sites exist near major load centres.

A potential for development of about 23,000 MW of new hydro-electric generating capacity has been identified in Afghanistan in various studies in recent years. Of this potential, 18,000 MW are harnessed on the Panj and Amu Rivers along the boundary between Afghanistan and the USSR. The remaining 5,000 MW are located primarily in two areas, on the Kokcha and Kabul Rivers.

The country's natural gas deposits are estimated at 120 billion cubic meters and coal deposits at 300 mil-



A view of  
Naghlu hydro-  
electric  
station



lion tons. By developing gas also for sustained economic and industrial growth, towns and villages could be lit and brightened up. This will accelerate major social changes in the interest of the nation.

Owing to the importance of power in socio-economic development, the current directive for the quinquennial plan (1986—1991) pays due attention to the development of the power industry with concern for the expansion of other sectors.

The basic objectives of government in the power sector could be formulated as follows:

- to stabilize power supply for the sound operation of industries;
- to have larger power production capacities for achieving the objectives of future plans and to create a balance between supply and demand in this sector;
- to provide the basic industries with power and to meet civic and urban needs;
- to implement the programmes envisaged at a faster rate.

In central sec-  
tion of Khair-  
Khana ther-  
mo-electric  
power station



Electricity for  
People

The five-year directives envisage power generation and distribution. The installed capacity will be raised from 420 MW in 1985 to 540 MW in the last year of the period and power output from 1,311 million KWh to 1,750 million KWh. It is worth mentioning that the role played by whole-hearted cooperation and assistance of the Soviet Union is of great significance in the electric power development plans, particularly during the current five years.

During these years, several electric power projects are to be built with the assistance of the Soviet Union. The main of them are 110 KW transmission line Naghlu-Sorubi-Mahipar-Kabul, 220 KW transmission line from USSR border to Kunduz province; the reconstruction of some networks will be also undertaken. The above projects have been partly implemented and the work is being continued successfully.

Under the programme for the development of power sector, efforts will be made to situate generating plants and put up distribution networks in such a way that this important infrastructure may not be concentrated in one particular area. This will be done with a view to ensure a balance between power production and distribution, to develop industries and raise the standard of living of the people. Meanwhile, ground will be prepared for launching industries in certain underdeveloped areas by constructing smaller hydro- and diesel-power stations to bring about a drastic change in the way of life of the people there.

With the creation of new capacities, improvement of existing networks, sound management and maintenance of production and distribution facilities, efforts will be made to utilize to the maximum the power generation capacities and reduce energy losses.

To achieve the objectives of the five-year directives a total of 8,870 million Afs, which actually constitutes 8 per cent of the total investment under the plan, shall be invested in the power sector. This will be 2.5 times higher than the actual expenditure during the previous five years.

In addition, for development and full utilization of power resources and for co-ordinating this sector with all other economic sectors and meeting the increasing needs of the people, surveys and studies on utilization of other energy sources have been envisaged in the five-year period in order to diversify the energy sources, determine the possibilities of further utilization of natural resources and open the way for long-term economic development.

By A. Sh. Satarzai

## YOUTH

## FRIENDSHIP CONSTRUCTS

According to an agreement between the Democratic Youth Organization of Afghanistan (DYOA) and the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union (Komsomol), a construction student brigade, under the symbolic name of "Friendship", was working in Kabul last autumn. During forty days, the envoys of Soviet youth were working at the construction of new workshops of Kabul Prefabricated Factory. Their work has become another example of friendly assistance of the Soviet people to the Afghan people.

Kabul Prefabricated Factory occupies a large area on the outskirts of the city, behind the airport, at the foot of the mountainous range surrounding Kabul from the west. It produces all necessary components for building multi-storeyed residential blocks, which are also assembled by its workers. At present, the factory's capacity is 51 thousand sq.m. of dwelling space per year. But after reconstruction, which is scheduled to be over in 3 year's time, its capacity will be doubled; it will exceed 100 thousand sq.m. of dwelling space per year. Members of the Komsomol construction brigade were working on two sites of reconstruction, i.e., steel framework manufacturing workshop

and electrical sub-station, for which they laid foundations.

Afghan engineer Hussain, who supervised the work of Soviet builders told our correspondent that members of the Komsomol brigade had been working selflessly and exerted every effort to accomplish the task entrusted to them. Within forty days they completed work which, previously, had been accomplished in 100 days. All the money earned by the Soviet students — 220 thousand Afghanis — was donated by them to the DYOA Fund for construction and support of the *Watan* children's homes and boarding schools.

As was reported to our correspondent by the chief of the brigade, Soviet engineer from Sverdlovsk, Sergei Chemezov, the very idea of organizing such a brigade had been mooted a year earlier. It was initiated by the Soviet soldiers who had returned home from Afghanistan. Having been in this country for two years, they saw for themselves the great difficulties country's economy had suffered as a result of the undeclared war; they wanted to contribute to the country's development. Their services in Afghanistan, where they defended life and interests of the Afghan people, helped them better under-





stand the needs of this long-suffering country. Having returned home, to their peaceful work or studies, they were in their hearts nourishing aspirations and agony of the Afghan people. Some of them, on exchange of views, proposed that a volunteer brigade be formed for working in Afghanistan. They spoke to the Central Committee of the Komsomol, to other authorities, and wrote a letter to the 20th Komsomol Congress. The Congress supported their initiative, and the Central Headquarters of the Student Construction Brigades, having agreed with the Afghan side, assigned a number of regional and city Komsomol committees to select 20 persons to be dispatched to Kabul. Those, who wanted to go, were many times more than the number required, but the selected ones were the best, the most experienced participants of construction brigades from the cities of Moscow, Leningrad, Novosibirsk, Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk and Dnepropetrovsk — cities that had sent the largest numbers of the applications for participation in the brigade. Seventeen members out of the twenty had passed their military service in Afghanistan; some of them had been wounded and awarded military insignia. For the second time they came to this country to build new bridges of friendship and understanding.

However, the peaceful labour of the Soviet students, from time to time, was interrupted by the impact of the on-going war. Once in the morning, before the beginning of work, field

engineers found out and defused the mine planted in the foundation pit by the enemy.

Once they were witnesses to the accident of a Soviet helicopter that had been shot down by *dushmans*. The crew was evidently trying to do their best to drive the machine further from the inhabited part of the city, from buildings and the airport. And still the helicopter crashed within the factory's site and exploded in the yard in front of the administrative building. The Komsomol members rushed to the building to help put out the fire fuelled by the explosion.

This was one of the episodes that made them, once again, remember that war is still going on, and the enemy is still doing its utmost to undermine the achievements of the April Revolution. However, for all of them, experienced soldiers tempered in the battles against *dushmans*, war was nothing new; they were ready every moment to pick up arms and defend themselves and, if necessary, their Afghan comrades. And still they were upset by an unexpected illness of one of their best friends, a student from Chelyabinsk, Victor Svezhentsev, who died as a result.

And still, in spite of all difficulties, on the day of their departure, the Soviet students expressed their readiness to continue this work and wished to come here, again and again, for rendering assistance in construction toward a better life for the Afghan people.



Some of the results of forty days' work

Afghan youth gratefully seeing off the Komsomol team

During the work



## BUSINESS

# "Cam" Means Enjoyment

*Cam* Ltd (*cam* in Dari means "object of pleasure, enjoyment") is a well-known name at home and abroad. It has won 18 gold, silver, bronze and platinum medals from the International Coca-Cola Company, thus occupying first place in the region and third in the world.

Likewise, *Cam* was awarded the Order of People's Friendship at the first nation-wide conference of private entrepreneurs, held in May, 1987 in Kabul, that assessed the company's activity as praiseworthy.

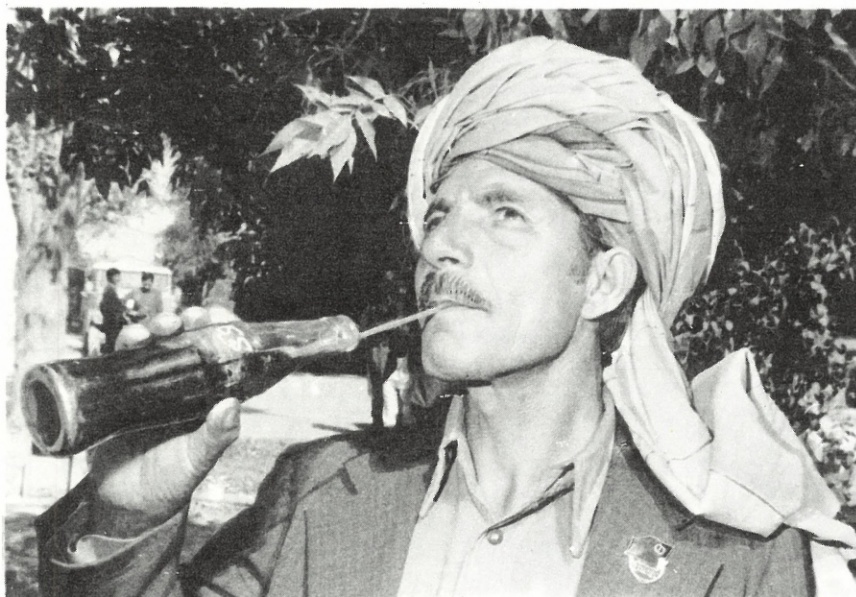
Here is what our correspondent Farouq writes about this company.

"I headed towards the enterprise at 8:30 a.m. A large number of cars and trucks at the front gate caught my attention. A caravan of almost 50 trucks, loaded with Coke and Fanta bottles, was getting ready to go to the market while some other lorries were being loaded.

By 10 o'clock loading was finished

Modern equipment is used for producing soft drinks

By the automatic bottling line



and the trucks left one after another for their destinations.

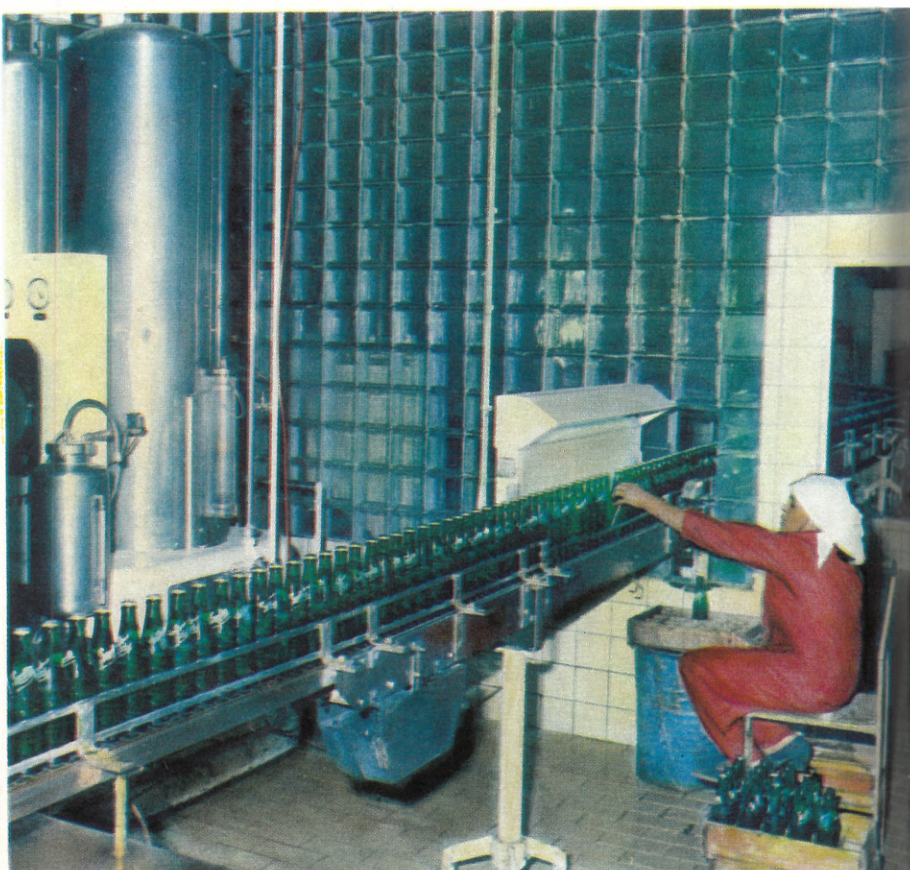
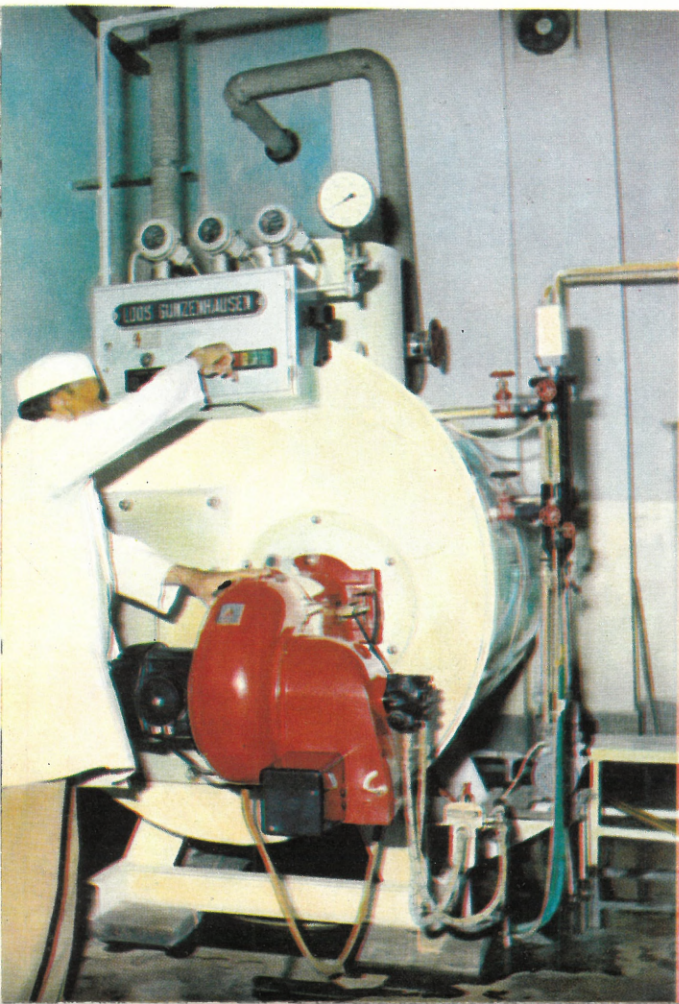
My acquaintance with the factory began at the visitors' hall where an impressive display of medals and orders won by the company attracted my attention. Here I was introduced to **Roh Afza**, Deputy Manager of the enterprise, who accompanied me during the visit. I asked her when and how the business had started. She said:

"The *Cam* joint stock company is a private enterprise producing non-alcoholic drinks. It has close cooperation with the Atlanta Coca-Cola

Company, located in the State of Georgia, USA. Since its establishment in 1971, this enterprise has maintained close links with the parent company which supplies us with raw materials, machines and equipment as well as helps us in maintaining the high quality of our produce.

"Every year, a number of experts from the Atlanta factory visit our firm and check the quality of the products. They solve some of our technical problems and help us overcome our shortcomings.

"The firm was started in February, 1970 with the 50 share-holders, inclu-





ding Afghan Insurance Company. Currently, its capital exceeds 81.6 million Afs. The production capacity is 86.4 million bottles (21.6 million litres) per year. However, so far *Cam* has utilized up to 35 per cent of its total production capacity: even during the six hottest months the firm cannot utilize its full capacity because of the lack of bottles. And in the 6 months which are rather cold the production is regulated by the market demand," she said.

At present, *Cam* products include Coca-Cola, Fanta, Sprite, Tonic and Soda. The water they use comes from a 60-metre-deep tube-well which is connected to a large pressure tank from where it is taken to the distillation section because the closed system of the process requires the best hygienic drinking water. Since *Cam*'s non-alcoholic drinks are very popular throughout the country, they are mostly consumed the same day.

*Cam* itself delivers its products all over the country at the same price, i. e. 216 Afs per box of 24 bottles. All sellers are expected to take one Afghani per bottle as their retail commission. Thus, the legal price of each bottle is 10 Afs throughout the country. Those charging more should be fined by the authorities concerned.

*Cam* opened another firm for the production of Carbon dioxide in 1987. It produces 150 Lb of gas annually. Its products are not only used in *Cam* factory, but also meet the demands of various heat centres of the country.

Concerning state assistance rendered to the private sector in recent years, Roh Afza told me: "The state pays great attention to promoting the activities of the domestic enterprises cooperating with foreign firms and give to them a lot of considerable privileges. For example, the *Cam* company has been greatly helped by the state in the spheres of financial assistance, tax and tariff exemptions, bank credits, supply of electricity, sugar, fuel, drilling tubewells as well as shipment of its products to the remotest corners of the country."

Lately, the company received 38 million Afs as credit for purchasing new bottles. This credit of the Industrial Promotion Bank was provided on easy terms and with low interest. Spurred on by this timely state assistance, *Cam* has plans to build another non-alcoholic beverage factory in two years with a production capacity of 20,000 bottles per hour. In this connection, it should be also mentioned that the state has promised to drill a deep well for the new factory. In running their business, they take diverse initiatives to encourage the company's employees and workers to enhance their competences as well as their productivity. For example, in 1976, based on the proposal of the co-ordinator of the enterprise approved by the general meeting of all share-holders, 30 most competent and honest workers of the factory were allowed to buy shares in the factory for the overall interest of the enterprise. Their share value

ranges from 20 to 120 thousand Afghanis.

Likewise, in 1984 a total of 44 workers were allowed to become the factory's honorary co-owners holding shares ranging from 50 to 225 thousand Afghanis. Currently, our total share-holders number 283 persons.

"The share-holders of our enterprise have the privileges to take part in general meetings of the company, vote, criticize and give their opinion on the future guidelines of the functioning of the factory," Roh Afza concluded.

Today, *Cam* is run by 201 full-time employees working in two shifts of eleven hours, and 50 students, who work part-time.

Mohammad Mohsen Mohsinyar, who has been working at *Cam* for over 17 years, gets a monthly salary of 14,000 Afs and, as an honorary share-holder of the factory, draws several benefits from the general profits of the factory.

Due to his fruitful services to the factory, Mohsinyar was recognized as a stock-holder of the enterprise in 1976 with an honorary share of 9,000 Afs. Now he takes part in the annual meetings of the stock-holders and as such enjoys all other rights and privileges.

Mohsinyar graduated from Kabul Mechanical School in 1941. He then worked for some time at Jangalak Factory and Afghan Textile Company. He joined *Cam* on its inception.

By Farouq

Trucks with Coca-Cola labels ready to carry the refreshing production

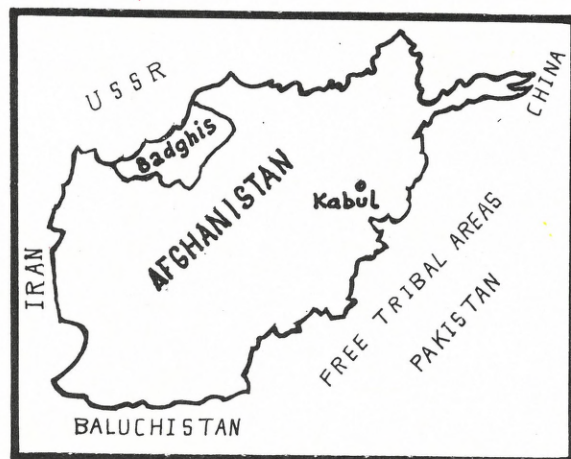




## PLACE TO VISIT

# BADGHIS IN LEGENDS AND LIFE

A view of  
Badghis —  
the Old  
Garden



Badghis is a beautiful province with a rich history, located in the north-west of Afghanistan. It borders in the south and west on Herat, south-east on Ghor, north-east on Fariab province and on the Turkman SSR in the north and north-west.

The province lies between two mountains, Tirband Turkestan and Firozkoh, and covers an area of 19,930 square kilometres. Almost all the territory of the province is occupied by ranges of hills, rising up to 100—500 metres. Firozkoh or Safidkoh (white mountain) separates Badghis from Herat province in the west. Badghis is situated at an altitude of over 900 metres above the sea level and has a temperate climate.

Scientists consider that the name Badghis was derived from the word *Bad* (wind), because the area is very windy. It was also called *Baghshor* and *Bagh Dis* (old garden) since the place was very green and lush in ancient times. Historians have mentioned that during the Islamic period there were grand brick structures with underground rooms, green gardens and fertile fields in Badghis. It was described at that time as "a most productive and rich part of Khorasan".

The most important historical monument in the province is Qala-i-Mazato (the fortress of Mazato) built on a high mountain in the south-west of Qala-i-Naw city. It still retains its magnificence. Other historical places in the province are the shrines of Imam Asghari and Khoja Abdal on Laman mountain, and those of Mir Ghiasuddin and Khoja Abul Qasim at Kharistan. Achaemenid, Greek, Bactrian and Sasanid coins, stone beads, etc. have been discovered in Dabrange area, at the foot of Firozkoh, and in Jawati, Nahre Arman and Nahre Sia areas of Ghormach district.

The historical figures of ancient Badghis were Hanzala Badghisi, the first poet of Dari language, and Naizak Badghisi who took active part



Traditional  
style housesA part of  
remnants of  
an old *Mad-  
rassah*

in the struggle against Amavid aggressors.

Abundant snowfalls in winter and rains in spring have provided congenial conditions for growing pastures and forests in the province.

90,000 hectares of land are covered by pistachio trees, and 10,000 hectares by pine forests. It also has 10,000 hectares of pasture lands.

The most important river in Badghis is the Murghab River which originates from the eastern part of Hesar mountain and runs down the Jawand valley. Murghab's chief tributaries are Qudian and Kharbaid rivers which flow through Jawand area and make up the Jawand river.

Eighty-five per cent of lands in the province are unirrigated while the rest are irrigated by nearby springs.

Badghis is inhabited by Pashtoons, Tadjiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmans, Baluches and Kazakhs; the total population of the province exceeds 209,500 people. It is an agricultural area with more than half the population engaged in agriculture.

Since the soil and the climate of Badghis are favourable for growing fruits, varieties of fruits like pistachios, apricots, peaches and apples are available here. Medicinal herbs such as licorise and cumin earn a good income for its residents.

Most peasants of the province are organized in agricultural cooperatives. The union of peasants' cooperati-

ves of Badghis has 3,300 members. Peasants are provided with improved wheat seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides; live-stock is vaccinated against animal diseases.

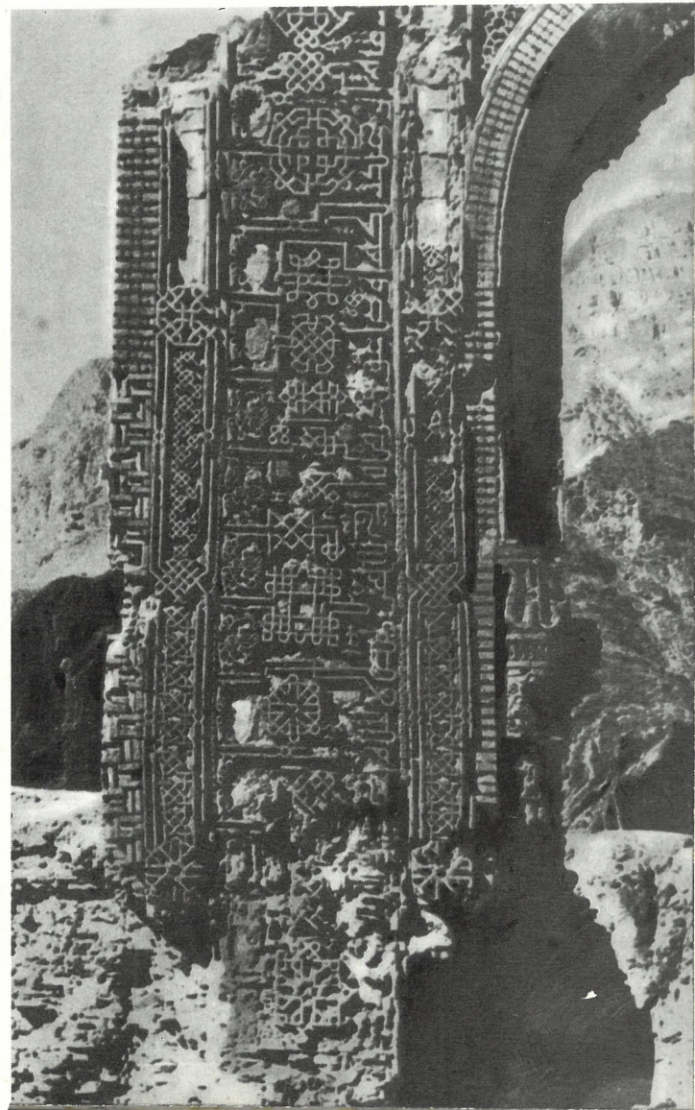
Rich pastures provide favourable conditions for live-stock farming, which constitutes the main economic activity of the residents of Badghis. Karakul sheep-breeding is especially popular here. Karakul pelts and wool bring in the larger share of the income of the population of the province.

Local handicrafts are numerous in Badghis. Carpet, rug and felt weaving industries are common. Carpets, produced in Badghis — particularly, Mauri or Morichaqi — enjoy world wide fame.

Badghis province has four districts — Qadis, Murghab, Jowand and Ghormach — and one sub-district, Koshk Kohna. There are 735 villages in it, which are located far from each other.

Qala-i-Naw city, where over 60,000 persons — that is, more than 11,000 families have settled, is the centre of Badghis. The city has 610 shops supplying a large variety of consumer goods, foodstuffs and other materials needed by the people.

Educational opportunities for the residents in Badghis have become comparatively better. At present, 21 schools, among them seven high schools, with an enrollment of about





Only flowers  
can express  
the hearty  
gratitude of  
people to  
defenders of  
peace

Making covers  
for donkeys—  
a traditional  
craft

Gossiping and  
smoking *Che-  
lam*, Afghan  
popular pipe,  
after hard  
work of car-  
pet weaving





5,000 students, are functioning in the province. Two schools, with 250 students on their rolls, were established recently under the national reconciliation policy. But still a number of schools do not function as a result of the war.

The campaign against illiteracy is increasingly gaining momentum. There are now 110 literacy courses, organising over 2,000 literacy learners, active in the province. Over 210 women are also acquiring literacy in 13 literacy courses conducted voluntarily by members of the Provincial Women's Council. Till now, over 5,000 persons have completed these courses. The vast strata of Badghis people lent their support for the government of Afghanistan by joining the party and social organisations in the province.

After the proclamation of the new policy, 164 men have joined the PDPA, 140 the DYOA, 277 women the Women's Council, 70 the various trade unions and 50 the National Front in Badghis province.

At present, over 2,000 residents are organised in the ranks of the PDPA in 71 primary party organizations, 1,800 in women's councils and 1,180 in TU primary units, while 3,600 individuals are members of the Provincial Council of National Front.

As in every nook and corner of the country, in Badghis too, the national reconciliation policy has opened up new vistas for its residents. Sixty-five commissions of NR, which include 550 influential figures have so far been established there.

So far, 8,000 armed and unarmed people have given up their life of wandering and resumed normal vocations in various localities.

The first stage of elections to the local organs of state power and administration has been successfully completed in most parts of the province, and the second stage is in progress in the rest of the areas. Over 500 trusted deputies (including some former heads of armed opposition groups) have been elected to over 60 councils of people's deputies in the province.

Nowadays, when the policy of national reconciliation is being successfully implemented for the well-being of Afghan people and the development of our homeland, the people of Badghis are also working whole-heartedly for its practical realization.

The heroic people of Badghis contribute their share to ensuring peace by setting up security posts defending the people and homeland against the atrocities of the enemies who wish to disturb the normal life of the people. Establishment of over 40 security posts, in which around 1,000 men are organized, including former members of anti-state groups, testifies to this resolve.

By M. Ismael



An open market: using the time to clean wheat



Arefa seeks the bright future in the words of the teacher



# 1988

## AFGHANISTAN

جښار

### JANUARY

Su	3	10	17	24	31
Mo	4	11	18	25	
Tu	5	12	19	26	
We	6	13	20	27	
Th	7	14	21	28	
Fr	1	8	15	22	29
Sa	2	9	16	23	30

### FEBRUARY

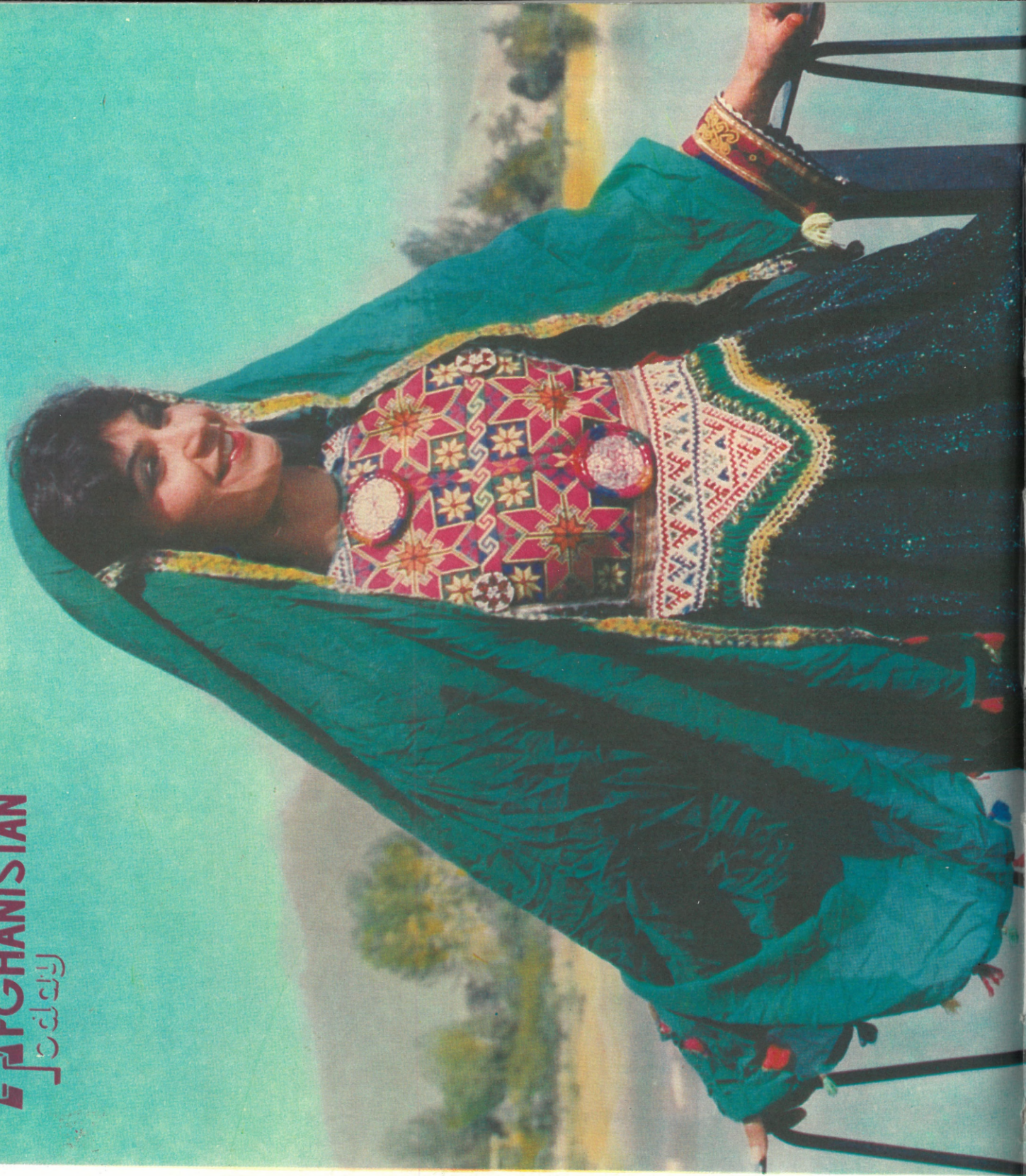
Su	7	14	21	28	
Mo	1	8	15	22	29
Tu	2	9	16	23	
We	3	10	17	24	
Th	4	11	18	25	
Fr	5	12	19	26	
Sa	6	13	20	27	

### MARCH

Su	6	13	20	27	
Mo	7	14	21	28	
Tu	1	8	15	22	29
We	2	9	16	23	30
Th	3	10	17	24	31
Fr	4	11	18	25	
Sa	5	12	19	26	

### APRIL

Su	3	10	17	24
Mo	4	11	18	25
Tu	5	12	19	26
We	6	13	20	27
Th	7	14	21	28
Fr	1	8	15	22





Sa 1 8 15 22 29 30

MAY

Su 1 8 15 22 29  
Mo 2 9 16 23 30  
Tu 3 10 17 24 31  
We 4 11 18 25  
Th 5 12 19 26  
Fr 6 13 20 27  
Sa 7 14 21 28

JUNE

Su 5 12 19 26  
Mo 6 13 20 27  
Tu 7 14 21 28  
We 1 8 15 22 29  
Th 2 9 16 23 30  
Fr 3 10 17 24  
Sa 4 11 18 25

JULY

Su 3 10 17 24 31  
Mo 4 11 18 25  
Tu 5 12 19 26  
We 6 13 20 27  
Th 7 14 21 28  
Fr 1 8 15 22 29  
Sa 2 9 16 23 30

AUGUST

Su 7 14 21 28  
Mo 1 8 15 22 29  
Tu 2 9 16 23 30  
We 3 10 17 24 31  
Th 4 11 18 25  
Fr 5 12 19 26  
Sa 6 13 20 27

SEPTEMBER

Su 4 11 18 25  
Mo 5 12 19 26  
Tu 6 13 20 27  
We 7 14 21 28  
Th 1 8 15 22 29  
Fr 2 9 16 23 30  
Sa 3 10 17 24

OCTOBER

Su 2 9 16 23 30  
Mo 3 10 17 24 31  
Tu 4 11 18 25  
We 5 12 19 26  
Th 6 13 20 27  
Fr 7 14 21 28  
Sa 1 8 15 22 29

NOVEMBER

Su 6 13 20 27  
Mo 7 14 21 28  
Tu 1 8 15 22 29  
We 2 9 16 23 30  
Th 3 10 17 24  
Fr 4 11 18 25  
Sa 5 12 19 26

DECEMBER

Su 4 11 18 25  
Mo 5 12 19 26  
Tu 6 13 20 27  
We 7 14 21 28  
Th 1 8 15 22 29  
Fr 2 9 16 23 30  
Sa 3 10 17 24 31





## SOCIAL WELFARE



## CENTRAL POLYCLINIC

The Central Polyclinic started its work in May 1985 in order to expand and make medical services available to greater number of Kabul citizens. It was built in cooperation with the Soviet Union and with its material assistance. 131 million Afghanis (over 2.6 million dollars) were spent by the government of Afghanistan and 9 million roubles (equal to 45 million dollars) by the Soviet Union for its construction and establishment.

The three-storey building of the Polyclinic has over 300 air-conditioned rooms which accommodate 29 different departments, well-equipped with modern medical instruments and other facilities being rare not only in Afghanistan but in the region as well. The Polyclinic works from 8 a. m. till 6:30 p. m. and is visited on average by 3,500 patients daily.

Soviet doctor,  
Afghan nurse  
serving the  
patients

Previously it was a small medical centre which had only the name of the state central polyclinic. In 1984, there were only 16 physicians, 36 nurses, 5 technologists and 2 pharmacists who were working in cooperation with specialists from friendly countries.

Now the total number of the personnel is 240. Among them there are 45 physicians, 42 nurses, 12 technologists, 4 pharmacists, 13 medical assistants, 22 staffmen, 4 vaccinators and 5 medical recorders. Besides, 35 specialists from the Soviet Union are working in the Polyclinic.

The department of electrocardiography equipped with modern electrocardiographs, electroencephalographs and audiometric devices is in itself a new phenomenon for out-patients in Afghanistan. Now all necessary check-ups can be done in this polyclinic without hospitalizing a patient for the purpose.

The pediatric department in addition to children's doctors has also an ear, nose and throat specialist as well as injection services specific for children. A special infectious diseases department for children with contagious diseases is in the service of patients from morning till evening.

The department of stomatology renders all-round services, including orthopedy and surgery. The prosthesis services are rendered here free of charge.

The department of tuberculosis functions in cooperation with the Institute of Tuberculosis and carries-out TB tests and for the diagnosis they prepare specific charts for every patient. Patients receive free medicines and are under supervision of physicians till their complete recovery.

The Polyclinic has a well-equipped laboratory where both Afghan and Soviet experts work.

For the last two Afghan years about 840 thousand patients were treated, 19.5 thousand patients received admission notes for hospitalization, rentgenography was done for about 7 thousand patients, more than 43 thousand children were vaccinated, 4,400 laboratory tests were done and 99,565 patients received free medicines in the Central Polyclinic.

In addition to this, the doctors and nurses from the Central Polyclinic work in its branches set up in Khair Khana Mena, Khoshhal Mena and Rahman Mena residential areas of Kabul city.





# FREE LUNCH FOR ALL



Free meal in a friendly atmosphere

Twelve noon in Afghanistan is the start of official lunch hour, time for *nan-e-chasht*, as it is called here. A lunch break in itself is not significant because it exists all over the world. But what makes it extraordinarily meaningful in this country is that the noon meal is provided to employees in all government and private establishments completely free of charge. Heavily subsidized office lunches, where the employee gets a complete meal for a nominal sum, are common, but Afghanistan is perhaps the only country to provide an entirely free lunch on every single full working day.

About three decades back some enlightened employers started providing free lunch to their staff. But this was an individual arrangement. An institutional basis to it was given in 1951 when the Finance Ministry began to provide free lunch to its staff. This was found to save valuable man hours. Work started early — 8 a. m. in summer and 8:30 a. m. in winter — and because of the long distances people had to travel to their offices, it was not always possible for them to prepare lunch early in the morning before leaving home. So they would take a hasty noontime snack at a neighbouring *chaikhana* (tea shop), or cafeteria. This meant considerable waste of time. Besides, the food was often of dubious quality. Providing lunch at office was found to be more conducive, both to office efficiency and general well-being.

The immediate success of the measure resulted in the government extending it to all public institutions. The Finance Ministry would provide funds for the food itself, but all other incidental costs — like cookery, salaries of cooks and helpers, cost of running dining halls — were to be met by the respective departments. But in this first year the amount spent per person was not fixed, which resulted in considerable variations in the running costs of different establishments.

In order to streamline the system, a sum of two Afghani per person was fixed in 1952. This has, of course, been increased over the years to 10, 15 and 20 Afghani, till in August last year it was revised further to 30 Afghani per person. Today the Department of Social Security issues guidelines to all ministries, departments and institutions regarding the noon meal scheme. The expenditure per head has been worked out on the basis of Health Ministry estimates. According to its latest recommendations, each person who does normal work, excluding hard physical labour, needs a total of 2,700 calories a day, of which 1,160 are required at mid-day. The department has also indicated the various items of food and proportions that provide the requisite calories — *nan* (bread made of whole wheat flour), rice, oil, salt, onions, tomatoes, potatoes, *dal* and mutton. The everyday menu and its variations are then worked out in individual

departments according to their needs. It usually contains essentials of a balanced diet — cereals, proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins. Often salad, fruit or a sweet dish is provided as well.

In very small establishments, where it is not always feasible to have a cooking establishment for a few persons daily, 30 Afghani a day is given in cash to employees in lieu of lunch. People with health problems may also take cash instead, on providing a medical certificate. But for obvious reasons this is not a practical alternative.

Significantly, in many offices, the task of supervising the lunch scheme has been entrusted to the finance department, which ensures better financial management of the available resources.

A corollary of the free lunch scheme has been the construction of common dining rooms in larger offices. The very process of all colleagues eating together creates a bonhomie, and is indicative of the egalitarian nature of Afghan society. By contrast, the system of subsidized meals or eating in crowded cafeterias seems dehumanized, and there is certainly less interaction between people there.

It is legally binding on private establishments to provide free lunch to their staff as well. The Department of Labour Inspection ensures this. And while a few exceptions may be there, the noon meal is now so basic a part of Afghan culture that, often enough, one walks into a shop or tailoring establishment around noon to see preparations for lunch in progress.

To outsiders, used to either carrying lunch from home, or indifferent meals hastily eaten in office canteens, the entire concept is a unique experiment in employees' welfare. Even to envisage such a mammoth scheme on such an all-pervasive scale is mind-boggling.

Because everyone eats the same food, irrespective of rank, it is of uniform quality and quantity, and is always served on time. In a large office it is possible to have economies of scale, and generally enough cash is left over for such extras. And there is always enough food to go round. In fact, most of the labour engaged on a daily basis are also welcome to eat, along with visitors from outside Kabul. Whoever happens to be around at lunch time is welcome.

And this has fostered the spirit of sharing. The feeling that bread must be shared is a concept quite common to Afghanistan, and from this stems the famous Afghan hospitality. Drop in at any office, home or shop at noon time, and even a stranger will be asked to partake of whatever is being eaten. The invitation is unmistakably genuine, and the visitor actually feels obliged to share the meal for fear of offending the local sentiment.

By Radha



# KUDAKESTAN— THE LAND OF CHILDREN



...Zahira Begum is an employee of Kabul Municipality. Every morning, before work, she stops by at the kindergarten attached to her office, leaves her two-month-old son and three-year-old daughter with the supervisor, and then goes to the office. At 11:00 a. m. she is back again to nurse her baby, have a look at both the kids, then is back to work again. She returns in the evening, picks up the children, and sets off home, which for her, fortunately, is not far away.

There are thousands of mothers like Zahira in Afghanistan, women who, on account of the war and the additional burden of supporting their families, have been compelled to work while forging a brave new world for themselves. "Of course, it is difficult", they will tell you. "No mother is happy at the idea of having to leave her small children for long periods of time. But we know they are in good hands." And this is a mother's greatest consolation enabling her to concentrate on her work — be it at school, office or factory.

So integral has the *kudakestan* (Dari word for kindergarten) system become to the Kabul scene, that a stranger is intrigued by the daily sight that revolves round it. Every morning, before office hours, and every evening after office, he will notice large numbers of women in buses or on foot with one or two children in tow. Where do they go so regularly, he will wonder. And if he cares to ask, he will be told that they are on their way either to or from a *kudakestan*.

The system of day-care centres is a relatively new concept the world over, designed specially to help working mothers with small children. They have met with varying degrees of success and failure, but nowhere else do they function on such a large and organized scale as in Afghanistan, a truly unique system that has blended into the very fabric of our life. And the success of *kudakestans* is explained not only by the fact that they fulfil a pressing need, but also on account of the genuine love for the child that is an essential part of the Afghan psyche. No mere day-care centres, these, where children are dumped to be impersonally looked after, while their mothers are at work. The *kudakestans* are a home away from home, where youngsters are not merely looked after, but genuinely cared for as well.

When women were given equal rights with men after the April Revolution, their participation in labour naturally increased. It was then that the Government decided to establish more day-care centres where the children would be fed, taught the three R's and generally

looked after while their mothers were at work. It was a major decision taken to fulfil a simple need based on the welfare of both the mother and the child.

**Karima Keshtmand**, head of the General Directorate of Kindergartens of the Ministry of Education which oversees the work of all *kudakestans* in the country, says that before the Revolution, only 14 such centres existed throughout Afghanistan. These were expensive, and consequently, had a limited clientele. Today, there are 219 *kudakestans* in the country. Yet even these are not enough to meet the growing needs. The government plans to open 30 new centres, of which 10 will be located in Kabul.

Earlier, *kudakestans* were established only in residential areas. Three years ago however, it was decided to establish work place centres as well. These proved a boon to the mothers, because they found themselves nearer their children. It was also more convenient for nursing them.

The charges for the parents are nominal — 1,500 Afghanis a year per child for *kudakestans* in residential areas, and 2,000 Afghanis a year for the workplace centres. The government, on its part, spends 18,000 Afghanis a year per child in residential area *kudakestans*, and 20,000 a year in workplace ones, the difference in amount being due not to discrimination, but the fact that residential *kudakestans* are closed for three months in winter, while workplace centres are open all the year round.

In addition, there are also carefully structured fee concessions. For instance, if a child's father is killed in the war and his mother is a government employee, his entire fees are met by the government. Other widows pay 10 per cent of the fees.

It is rest time for the infants on that hot July morning when I visited the Kabul Municipality kindergarten. In a clean, wire-meshed room, some 15 babies are lying, each in its separate crib, some already asleep, some blissfully wide awake with soothers in their mouths. In the centre of the room a recalcitrant toddler who has no intention of resting, is being taken on a baby-walker by an attendant. The sheets, floors, walls are all spotless, and indoors it is cool and calm. The flies that are a scourge at this time of year are noticeably absent, and one gets the feeling of being in a well-ordered nursery. The staff appears cheerful and relaxed, though an attendant admits ruefully that she does have an occasional problem if all the 15 babies start howling together! Meanwhile my





Afghan colleagues who are accompanying me have begun playing with the toddlers. Considering that they are total strangers, I am amazed at their spontaneous response, as also at the children's own happy reaction.

In the nearby kindergarten of the same department, a group of three-to-six-year-olds are seated around a table, bibs tied neatly round their necks, waiting patiently for lunch. Educational charts line the walls, and the youngsters look clean, happy and healthy. Not that there are some initial adjustment problems, say the attendants, for children will be children. But these are never serious enough to be a problem. Take young Khalid, (5), who has been there just two days and insists he was better off at home. But he seems cheerful enough as he chatters like a magpie with his companions. It is a small, cosy centre, and the atmosphere is warm and homely.

The *Friendship Kindergarten* in one of residential areas, on the other hand, is a huge, impressive complex where **Ramzia Sadozai**, the head, has more than her hands full with 1,200 kids to cope with. Her task is best appreciated when she tells me the place was originally meant for 280 toddlers. Yet Ramzia Sadozai is calm and unflustered. Despite the large number of children under her charge, she manages to maintain personal contact with each child's parents, discussing their problems and progress. Her odds are great. She has 100 teachers and 50 domestic staff only, yet the linoleum floors are shining, the milk room spotless, and the children's health records meticulously kept. Immunizations and health problems are attended to at the nearby *Sherpur* clinic, and she is particular that a sick child doesn't infect the rest.

It is now lunch time and the children are sitting down to a substantial meal of *aush* (noodles) and yoghurt. One group of slightly older children has just returned from a trip to the zoo. They are tumbling out of the bus amidst excited yells of laughter. I note small, but significant details — each child is taking off outdoor shoes and is donning indoor slippers; there is a hanger for each to hang his belongings; and the children who are serving the food have kerchiefs tied neatly round their heads.

Shortage of space does create certain minor inconveniences like having to use the same classroom as dining area and rest room. Inconvenient yes, but this has not hampered cleanliness or discipline, I reflect, as I take in the rows of mattresses piled on top of each other, and the little shoes lined neatly against the wall.



While the ideal ratio of supervisors to children is 1:10 in creches and 1:25 in kindergartens, this is not always possible to maintain. Yet officials say all centres are of the same level, and judging by what I saw, there is no reason to doubt their claim.

What impresses a casual visitor to the *kudakestans* here is the genuine affection and care showered on each individual child. This is one feeling that cannot be feigned, and everywhere almost maternal love is showered on children by supervisors and attendants alike. This sort of individual attention is made easier because each centre is divided into age-wise groups — creches look after infants up to three years of age, after which they are moved to kindergartens. And within the creches there are further age-wise sub-groupings.

Efforts are made to involve the children in group activities like serving food, group games, nature study, etc. Care is taken also to make the meals as varied as possible, for little palates tire of monotony. But this is not at the cost of nutrition. Milk, for instance, is served thrice a day, but in varied forms — as yoghurt, or pudding. It is noteworthy, that even in the workplace kindergartens, food is cooked in separate kitchens, and is quite different from that served to the office staff.

Clearly such achievement is possible only through a trained and committed staff. Karima Keshtmand tells me there are on-going schemes to train professional kindergarten cadres, both in Afghanistan and abroad. In Kabul 120 supervisors are trained every six months, and at present the fifth batch is under training. Under a recent protocol with the GDR, 10 teachers will be sent there for training. Many Afghan teachers have already graduated from centres in Poland, the GDR and the USSR.

The Department of Kindergartens also has an elaborate system for monitoring the working of the *kudakestans*. Thirty-seven centres in residential areas are overseen by one general director, while 120 workplace centres are looked after by two general directors. Below them, each precinct has a supervisor, who is in charge of a certain number of *kudakestans*.

Quite apparently, the government of the Republic of Afghanistan has given high priority in a very progressive manner to child welfare. Significantly, it is one of the few countries in the world to have incorporated the UN Rights of the Child in its Constitution.

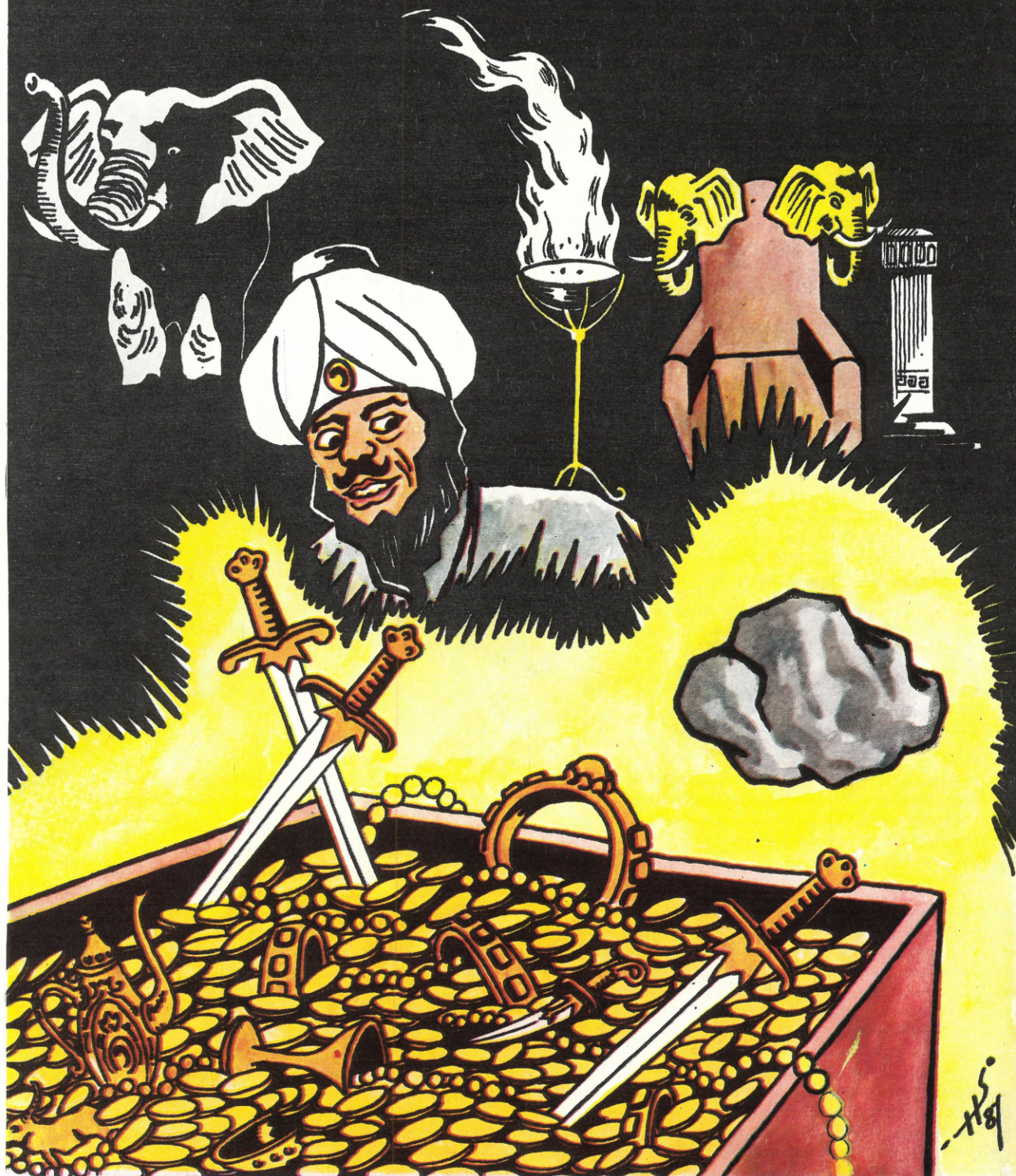
By Rastogi



FOLKLORE

# THE ALCHEMIST'S STONE

A LEGEND



Drawings by  
Huzhabr  
Shinwari



In the city of Kabul there are many places connected with the name of Ali Mardan. He was the person who was fabulously rich and did a lot for the city, but he was especially famous for his contribution to the decoration of the city with many beautiful buildings and laying out gardens. With the passage of time the stories originally based on real facts were added more and more details, and in such a way many legends appeared.

The story offered here is one of the many existing in the city folklore. It has been represented in a literary form by an Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Afghanistan Prof. Dr. Abdul Ahmad Jawed.

Once upon a time, under the blue heavens, there was none except God the Almighty, and the farther one went, the longer became the path, and however deep one dug, there was nothing but a deep well. During those times, there was a very handsome young man, whose name was Ali Mardan. Some four hundred odd years ago he lived in the heavenly city of Kabul. His father, too, was a renowned personage of his time, being of Kurd nationality and Rika tribe.

They say, once this young and handsome Ali Mardan was strolling along the banks of the Kabul River which flew besides his house. While walking to and fro, he happened to look at seven fairy-like beauties who were swimming in the river with their marble white bodies and long, black shining hair moving like a grim waterfall, and their dark black eyes. They were enjoying themselves. Among this bevy of seven beauties, there was one who was outstandingly beautiful and highly captivating. She enchanted Ali Mardan so that he fell in love with her with the strength of not one, but a hundred hearts put together. But the moment he leapt forward to express his feelings to her, all the mermaids turned into seven white pigeons and took to flight. Very soon they were out of sight. Ali Mardan was stunned and stood like a statue there. However long he waited, there was no sign of them any more. From that time onwards, he loitered here and there in search of his lost love, but to no avail. The flame for furtive beloved had so influenced his whole being that he had neither rest during the day nor sleep during the night. It went to such an extent that soon Ali Mardan turned into a thin and emaciated being. His parents were worried about their son's health, and tried their best to consult all the astrologers, religious and medical experts to treat him. But none could come to his rescue. Their only hopes were in the benevolence of God the Almighty.

At last, his father, suspecting his son to have lost his heart in love, very confidentially enquired about his secret. Ali Mardan, caught all of a sudden, had to divulge his secret to his father. He related the whole story to him.

Having gained this confidence his father consulted all the wise men of the city and requested for their guidance and opinion. They all jointly advised him that Ali Mardan should get married to a girl so beautiful that she may surpass the fairy he was so madly in love with. Then he was likely to get cured. Matrimonial proposals were sent all round. Wherever they heard about a beautiful girl, they rushed there to seek her hand for Ali Mardan. Thus all the beautiful girls of the city were shown to Ali Mardan, but he, being a difficult chooser, rejected them all. At last in an old woman's house, a girl was found, who was no less beautiful than the lost love of Ali Mardan. She resembled her in many respects. So the moment he saw her he gave his consent and regained his health like the one who had recovered his most precious lost treasures. Ali Mardan's parents were delighted on the occasion and made elaborate preparations for his wed-

ding. They hired singers, musicians and dancers from all over the country, illuminated their house and street, erected colourful tents and enclosures, and arranged concerts. The merriment lasted for full eight days and nights.

But after just a few days of their marriage, Ali Mardan again started looking pale and weary. He started losing weight rapidly and became devoid of all youth and happiness. His parents were, once again, obliged to consult palmists, astrologers, physicians and wise men. But all of them felt helpless in diagnosing or treating his ailment because they could not find any clue to the cause of his illness. His parents were forced to go back to the renowned wise men who might pray for his health. These prayers were conducted at midnight, but they had only a negligible effect on Ali Mardan's failing health. Astrologers tried to suggest ways and means for a cure. As a result various talismans and charms were provided by the renowned in the field. Astrologers tried to decipher his stars, while apothecaries tried to provide different kinds of herbs and medicinal powders for him. But neither medicines nor prayers, neither magic nor science could help Ali Mardan regain his health and spirit.

Then they say that one day an old man, with rough and scattered hair, in the attire of a dervish came to the house of Ali Mardan and said to him, "I know your secret and the cause of your present condition, but you must not disclose to any one what I will tell you to do to get out of it." Ali Mardan, who was full of worries and torture, promised the old man that he would do as he was asked. The Dervish said, "All flesh and blood of your wife is not of human origin. She is actually from among the angels and is in concord with the fairies. In order that you may believe all what I tell you, tonight you should make your food full of salt and in part of your body you should make a cut and fill it with some salt so that you may not go to sleep at night. You should also close your doors and windows tightly, and do not leave even a drop of water in your room. Then wait and watch what happens." Ali Mardan did what he was told and came to know hundreds of new facts.

In the middle of the night, when there was pindrop silence, Ali Mardan watched, horrified, that half the body of his wife turned into a dangerous serpent which slowly started crawling out of bed. The eyes of that black serpent were shining like a mirror and sparks of fire were coming out of her mouth. Slowly she went towards the river and, after swallowing tons of water, she returned to her bed and slept quietly. Ali Mardan's hair stood on end when he watched this scene, and he was stunned to death with fear. But he just held his breath and said nothing.

Next day the Dervish again came to his house and asked him what he had seen. Ali Mardan related the whole story. Then the Dervish said, "This time you should ask your wife to cook some food in the oven herself, and you will see that she will not agree to going close to the fire. This is the peculiarity of fairies. But you should not let her out of the fire. You should close so as soon as you find an opportunity, you should throw her into the fire. After that however hard she may plead, you should not let her out of the fire. You should so close the oven that she may not find any way out of it."

The next day, Ali Mardan somehow made his wife agree to cook some food in the oven. His wife pondered a little and finding no way to refuse, covered her arm with a thick cloth so that she may not be burnt by the fire. But as soon as she went close to the oven and was about to put the dough into it, Ali Mardan jumped out of his seat, quickly threw her into the fire and closed the oven tightly with a heavy flat stone. However hard his wife



pleaded, he did not relent. His wife was continuously crying, "Do let me out just once and I will let you know such an important secret that it will bring prosperity for you." But Ali Mardan did not listen to her at all and did not yield to her requests.

The very next day that holy man again visited Ali Mardan. After hearing the whole story from Ali Mardan, he became very happy. Together with Ali Mardan, that old man went to the oven. They opened it and found that the body of Ali Mardan's wife had been completely converted into ashes, and only two stones, a big and a small one were lying inside the oven emanating a kind of radiance. The bigger stone was the body of Ali Mardan's wife and the smaller one was of her few months' old foetus. The Dervish took the bigger stone himself and, while handing over the smaller one to Ali Mardan, said, "Look, this is the Alchemist's Stone. Whatever it touches it converts its essence and even if you touch a stone with it, it turns it into gold."

Iron, that contacts the Alchemist's Stone  
Gets converted straight into gold,  
As the sun's rays fall upon the stone,  
As precious it becomes as gold."

"Be quick," said the old man, "so that you may get plenty of wealth through this stone. But never forget devout and good people." After saying these words, the Dervish disappeared.



Ali Mardan then heaved a sigh of relief and touched with the stone all he had. Everything was converted into gold. Ali Mardan was beside himself with joy and excitement after this experiment. It was not very long before he had amassed a huge treasure. As Khakani puts it, he turned his hearth and all his utensils into gold. Some people would say that Ali Mardan had found a gold mine while others were of the opinion that he had got hold of Qarun's treasures or treasures of Zabulistan, while still others ascribed all his wealth to midnight prayers and blessings of the Holy Night.\*

Later Ali Mardan, copying the designs of the cities of Shush and Shushtar which are designed like an eagle and a horse respectively, designed the main square of Kabul Bazaar (known as "Charchhatta") in the form of a dragon, where the Mosque in the square represented the head of the dragon, the main street the body of the dragon, and other squares the tail and feet of the dragon.

But later, after many years, there was a storm like the deluge, when a "bloody snowfall" (as it is known in literature) took everything in its tide, and flood waters gushed out of the peaceful Kabul mountains turning the whole city of Kabul topsy turvy.

Still later, a severe earthquake (known in history as the P'g Earthquake) continuously shook the whole city for forty days just like a person rocking a cradle. It was because of this very earthquake that in its very first tremors many of the shops of the city were razed to the ground and their beautiful signboards and other decorations were so destroyed that never again did the shops have those old and beautiful decorations. Many a beautiful building, which stood once among parks and squares, went down to the ground like the hidden treasures of Qarun, and many a millionaire, who had forgotten to fear God, were completely ruined. Many old and grand trees went down into the cracks in the earth with no remnants of them to be seen, while others had only their branches full of fruit peeping out of the cracks.

This havoc had hardly been forgotten when a British general with his blood-thirsty men brought another devastation upon the bazaars of Kabul. \*\* It was at this time that the people used to say that our dear Kabul became a city of ruins.

Ali Mardan, after designing the Kabul Bazaar, converted its lanes into his palace and sleeping chambers, the area of cannons into the station for his own cannons and the Rikakhana area into a stable for his horses.

Ali Mardan made maps and plans for various other residential areas of the city as well. Two areas, known as Aliabad on the road to Kashmir, are named after him. The design of Kabul's grain market and the village of Aliabad are known as the masterpieces of his designing ability. The Shalimar gardens of Lahore with octagonal towers in each of its corners and one of the city's bazaars are attributed to Ali Mardan's designing talent. One of his well-known designs was the garden in Kabul which followed the design of his father's garden in Kandahar, and was quite big and beautiful. However, now this garden, which came to be known as the "Ali Mardan Garden", is no more there except for its mere name. He had

\* According to the Koran, this is one of the nights of the second half of the month of *Ramadan* (Moslem fasting month) when the holy Koran was revealed for the first time.

\*\* This fact refers to the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878—1881)



built various caravanserais and congregational halls all over the country. He used to welcome guests to his serais (inns) and would treat them very well. So much so that after the death of his father, he was given the title of *Baba-e-Sani* (the Great Man of the Day).

His kindly life was a source of jealousy to all and sundry. The news of his wealth and grandeur surpassed the boundaries of Kabulistan and spread all over India. Shah Jahan, the Emperor of India, desired to meet him. He ordered his court poets to compose an invitation for Ali Mardan and one of them, Qudus, wrote the following lines as invitation for Ali Mardan:

Go! Oh beautiful morning breeze,  
Take the news to my faithful friend,  
Tell him to come to the great Court,  
From the boat and the spring to the open river,  
As fast as prayers travel to the sky,  
Come just as fast by my side,  
Earnestness permitted just this to say,  
Words are scanty, but do come soon,  
Travel fast like a boat with anchor,  
For your place is empty in this court room,  
Must come as fast as he can in haste  
To quench his thirst, water taste,  
If only you would know my desire,  
You would come quicker than dire,  
Come as fast as you can oh hear,  
As the voice from the mouth to the ear,  
Come as fast as you can oh view,  
For you must be here before the news,  
Come as fast with your foot in stirrup,  
That all may with surprise stir up.

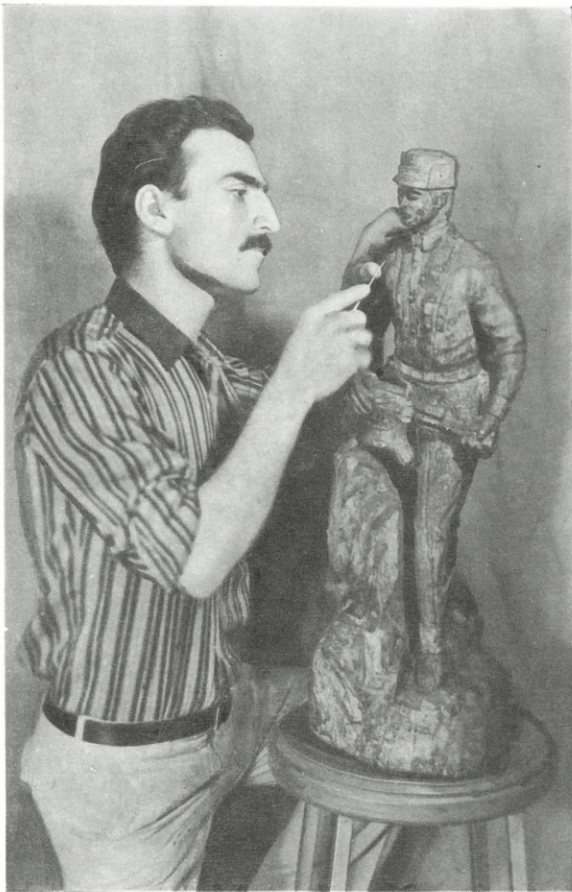
Ali Mardan, who had sensed the intentions of the King, decided to apologize and not accept the invitation. The second time Shah Jahan sent a cleverer messenger who was more dextrous in conversation, and he invited Ali Mardan to come to the court of the King with his Alchemist's Stone. Ali Mardan wanted to say many things in reply to this invitation, but after thinking for a while he said to the King's messenger that he was ready to come to meet the King, and present him with the precious stone, but that he wished that it should be presented by the bank of the River Jamuna where the royal court should be held with all the courtiers and other people present and that, too, after a practical demonstration of the powers of the stone. As such it was necessary that pieces of brass and iron should be collected over there. Shah Jahan accepted the proposal and rewarded the messenger handsomely. After a short while Ali Mardan visited the capital of India. On his arrival he was accorded a grand reception. Even the King, discarding his royal pride, came to receive him and embraced him warmly. Merry-making was accompanied with music. As was the custom of the royal court, five times the royal salute was offered to him like a royal guest. Shah Jahan bestowed on him rich presents of a golden studded sword, a turban, even horses with princely saddles and elephants with saddles lavishly decorated with precious stones, and covered with royal umbrellas.

Babu Sita Ram, a court painter, has depicted this scene with exquisite and meticulous details. Bowing down, Ali Mardan also presented the King with an illustrated volume of "Shah Nama" in the handwriting of Murshid Shirazi. Then all the courtiers and those present there took their respective seats. The King had reserved the famous royal guest house by the side of the River Jamuna for Ali Mardan, for that was one of the most beautiful palaces of the time.



At night beautiful lamps were lighted and chandeliers were hung everywhere, and then fireworks were arranged for the guest in accordance with the Khurasani tradition. The next day, all the people, both noble and gentile, went near the river bank and stood in rows. Ali Mardan, with million eyes on him went near the heap of metals which had been collected for the purpose, and with his Alchemist's Stone converted them all into gold. After that, while he was looking sternly at the tempted eyes of the King, Ali Mardan burst into an ironical laughter and threw the stone into the Jamuna River. Within the twinkling of an eye he made good his escape from those greedy persons. The King and his courtiers were stunned with utter amazement. Immediately, the King ordered sixty strong elephant keepers to take them to the river and take out the Alchemist's Stone. Soon all the elephants were in the centre of the river. They searched here and there, but the precious stone could not be traced. Although when the chains of the elephants touched the bottom of the river bed, they would come out converted completely into gold. Shah Jahan had never got hold of the stone itself and he took his desire of possessing it with him to his grave.





Eshaq while working on a *Soldier* sculpture

#### PEOPLE'S CULTURE

## LIFE DEDICATED TO ART

It was drizzling, but the heat was so strong that the drops evaporated before they could reach the ground. The city was covered with a sparkling, silverish shroud through which everything seemed unreal.

Mohammad Eshaq was standing under the tent of a small shop and was looking at the opposite side of the narrow street where antique shops were situated, close to one another. Behind the glass panes of one of the shop-windows there were wooden statues with vaguely carved faces, blackened with time. They were turned to different directions and, because of this, it seemed that they were moving.

The owner of the shop, having caught the boy's glare, came up to him and started narrating about the "real Nooristan", mysterious for many people, where according to a legend, the descendants of Alexander the Great live — the brave blue-eyed people with fair skin and hair. A peculiar style of wood-carving appeared and once flourished there. Each of the

figures, displayed in the shop could have said a lot. The boy had seen them before, but never had they impressed him so much, and they never seemed so alive to him.

They entered the shop. He took the sculptures in his hands one after another. The warmth of the wood pleasantly caressed his fingers. And, maybe foreseeing the future artist, the shop-keeper presented Eshaq with one of the sculptures. He understood that the boy had no money to buy it.

Thus began "the life in art" of the 14-year-old Mohammad Eshaq...

In his family everybody — his father, brothers and sisters — were fond of drawing. But none of them thought of becoming a painter. His father ran a small shop of construction materials, which was a source of livelihood for the family. Since his childhood, Eshaq liked to come here and rummage through a lot of interesting things, out of which it was possible to model, plane and saw. His father did not encourage this passion of his son. In his country it was considered sinful to draw people and animals, to say nothing of making them three-dimensional ... for this he might have incurred punishment. And the father tried to protect the boy.

Eshaq's talent was admired by all. He used to get away with everything, for which anybody else would have

been punished. He was the youngest in the family and, hence, everybody's pet. He studied in the high school, finishing two grades in a year. He completed his school in the year of the April Revolution. In Kabul there was only one place where one could go if one wanted to serve art. So he entered the Department of Fine Arts in the capital's university. There were no professional teachers but, instead, an atmosphere of creative quest reigned. Left to themselves, the students, indeed, "created" only as they could.

Eshaq decided to become a sculptor, and nothing else, at all costs. May be, the first one in Afghanistan. But nobody taught him this. He modelled from plasticine, clay and gypsum. He tried to work on stone. But, most of all, he was attracted by wood. He carved figures from *archa* (a kind of mountain fur-tree) and walnut, though the latter is difficult to work on. But the sculptures carved out of it are particularly beautiful, can be easily polished and have a specific brightness and warmth. His works were different in size, varying from very small up to a metre's height.

Later he started living with the family of his elder brother Mohammad Rahimi. He felt at ease with his brother's wife and their three children. With them lived another brother — Mohammad Amin, a student of Tash-



A warrior



kent Highway Institute — but he came home only in summer. Here Eshaq arranged his own "studio", a small room around four square metres, adjacent to the summer kitchen. When he worked his nephew and nieces always stood at the door and watched him, bewitched. They were his first fans, along with his brothers who had a penchant for beauty.

Gradually, everyone in the family became proud of Eshaq and helped him as much as they could. They said in the family that he was a good guy, who respected all and was respected by all. When he became a winner of the competition held by the Union of Artists of the Republic of Afghanistan for his sculpture, *The Torch of Pioneers*, and secured the first position, his brothers arranged a family lunch in his honour.

Eshaq likes to wander around the city, to be among the people, to sit with the vendors of fruits, vegetables and greens, who, according to him, are great wits. He likes to go to wheat fields which are in plenty, not only on the outskirts of Kabul, but even in the

centre of the city where one can come across vast stretches of land — and watch the work of peasants — ploughmen, sowers and reapers. He likes to enter the workshops of blacksmiths and tinsmiths where, suffocating from heat and soot, he may better perceive their hard labour. For hours he can watch nomads, whose tents one can see in plenty in summer, as well as to listen to music somewhere at a wedding party or during a festival trying to distinguish the voices of national instruments and plunging into the depths of popular music. He feels at ease with them, with all these common people.

At home he hurries to his closet and models from plasticine one figure after another, trying to convey the character, not to miss the most important features of what he has seen and heard.

He does not sleep well by night. He often wakes up and, trying not to disturb his dear ones, goes to his studio and draws. He makes a lot of pencil sketches, trying to find the necessary version of his future sculpture.



ture and, after having found the needed image, he carefully chooses his raw materials. Wood is expensive in Afghanistan and is sold by weight — a kilo of wood costs as much as a kilo of bread. And when the block is standing at rest, enticing and frightening at the same time, he can already see how it will look like finally. But he does not hurry to "remove all unnecessary parts". For long he examines the pencil sketches, plasticine "roughs" and thinks...

He works only in the evenings and early mornings. In the afternoons he teaches at the Maimanagi Painting School. He teaches them drawing but dreams of the boys becoming eminent sculptors like him.

...Eshaq arranges his works according to "topics". I watch his brothers help him, as if afraid that he may forget something. A peasant with a

Nomad girls

Motherland calls for reconciliation

(Continued on p. 31)





# PRESERVING PAST FOR FUTURE

Housed in an imposing building near the Darul Aman palace in Kabul is the National Museum of Afghanistan. It is as a museum should be — a place where one can savour both past and present, wandering at will through the large, spacious halls and plunging in the atmosphere. Indeed history comes alive as one steps into the entrance hall of what was once King Amanullah's municipality.

The visitor's attention is immediately attracted by a huge black marble bowl strategically placed in the central entrance. Found in 1935 at the Shrine of Mohammed Mir Wais Baba in Kandahar, the 15th century Islamic inscription on its inside suggests it was used to serve sherbet to pilgrims, while a later inscription on the outside lists the rules of the Kandahar Madrasah. At one time the outsized dish was also believed to be Buddha's begging bowl. This single piece at once conveys the prevailing theme of the museum — the varied and eclectic nature of Afghanistan's history. And thus the mood is set for a fascinating journey back in time.

Before the onset of world maritime activity in the 16th century, Afghanistan occupied a strategic position midway on the fabled Silk Route. As merchants, travellers and pilgrims traversed this ancient land route on their way to China, India, Greece and the Mediterranean, it became a vast melting pot of various civilizations, producing a culture that was perhaps unequalled in the world for its variety, richness and catholicity. In addition, links were also established and maintained with the tribal communities in the north and Iran in the south, which ensured the survival of local influences as well. A survey of the museum at Kabul brings this vital fact home as no words can, for words merely describe, while the artefacts are concrete visual testimonies that need no language to convey their message.

The sense of awe is reinforced in the upstairs corridor where one comes upon a seated Bodhisattva of the 5th century A.D., unearthed from Tepe Maranjan. Made of unbaked clay, the facial expression is one of intense spirituality, the hint of colour peeping through the eroded stone giving an idea of the exotic colours that once must have adorned it. Nearby is a beautiful wooden door inscribed in Kufic script with an ornate geometrical design. It is a 13th century piece recovered from Shar-i-Gholghola and is still remarkably intact.

The museum authorities have recently established some new halls for displaying Graeco-Bactrian finds, the Bhaktar hall with Stone Age relics, and the Shotorgi halls with bronze artefacts. While there are clear descriptive guides alongside most





exhibits in Persian, English or French, it is nevertheless advisable for the visitor to brush up his knowledge of Afghan and Indian history in order to better appreciate his visit.

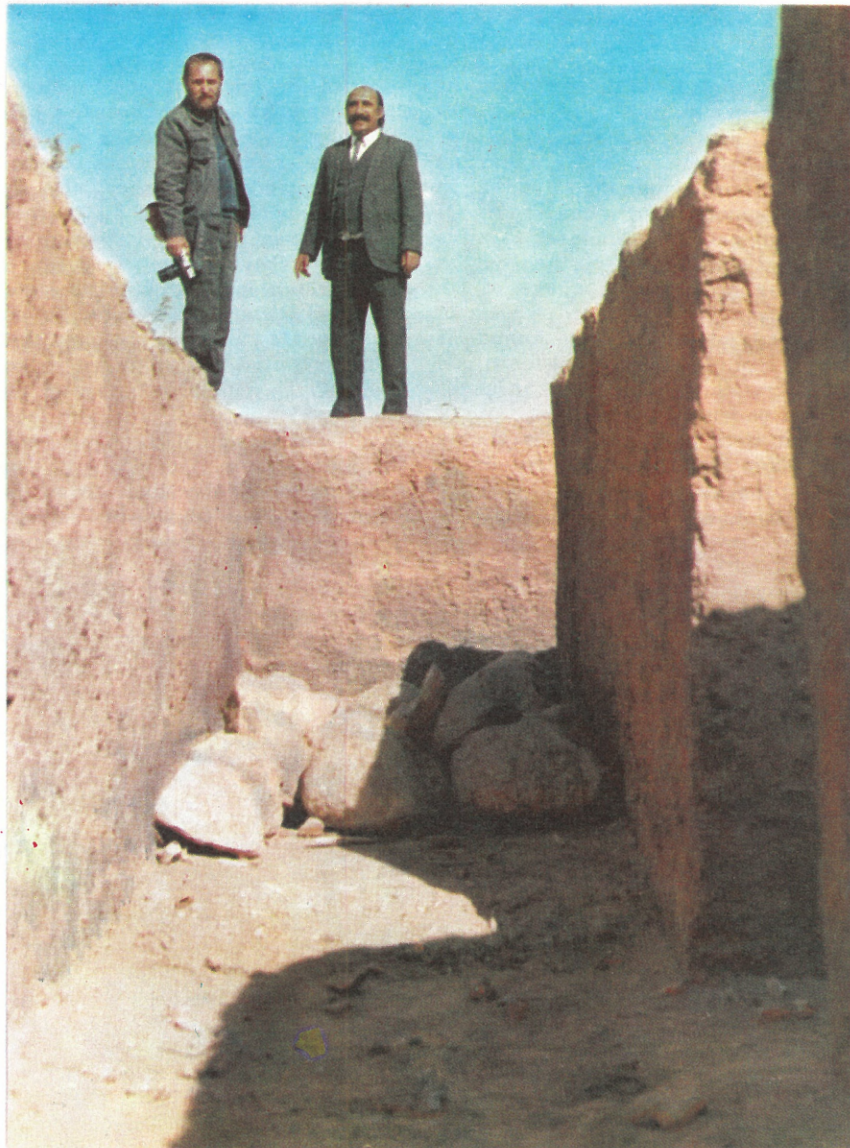
While the history of Afghanistan was first recorded in the annals of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia and the Han Dynasty of China, human habitation started millenia before, as is evident from the **Pre-historic hall**. Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages are well represented. Of particular interest here are the flint scrapers and cleavers used by early man to core human flesh, which were excavated at Darra Dadil and Darra Chaqman in Balkh province. A large copper ring with its lapis setting still intact through all these centuries, transports the viewer to the marvels of the past.

Some four or five thousand years ago, many urban civilizations flourished in the major river valleys of the Indus, Euphrates and Nile. Consequently, peasant farming communities arose to serve as the backbone of their economies. Mundigak in Afghanistan was one such site. The artefacts found here which are on display at the museum show a variety of printed sherds with geometrical and animal designs, mother goddess terracotta figurines and pipal leaf motifs that suggest links with the Indus Valley, and rounded human forms with large elongated eyes that are distinctly Iranian in inspiration. The Mundigak artefacts are important because they trace knowledge of Afghanistan to 3000 years before Alexander and reveal the active interaction with other famous world civilizations.

The Graeco-Bactrian period of Afghan history is encapsulated in the **I—Khanoum Room** (means "woman with a moon-like face"), which contains relics excavated at the site of this Greek city built by Alexander of Macedonia on his southward course to India. Photographs of excavations and plans reveal a typical Greek city, complete with theatre, granary, and necropolis. Two sun clocks are

particularly important here because they were used by the Bactrian Greeks in conducting astrological experiments. Other unique pieces include Greek statutory, ceramic medallions in bronze and gold, all of which are concrete proof that the area was once the cradle of a vigorous and thriving civilization.

In the 5th century B. C., Buddhism began to spread from the banks of the Ganges in India, across the Indus and through the Khyber Pass, into Afghanistan — a fact substantiated not only by the Ashokan edict found at Kandahar, but by the entire evolution of Buddhist art and sculpture excavated at Shotorak, Hadda and Bamyan.



An excavation site in Balkh province





One of the stands of the museum

These reveal Buddhist art from its early stages to latest. But the Buddhist art found in Afghanistan belongs almost entirely to the Mahayana school, portraying the Buddha in anthropomorphic or human form. Of great appeal in the **Shotorak Room** is a large schist relief of the Buddha entering nirvana at the age of 80. Vajrapani, his bodyguard, kneels at his head, while his cousin Ananda is at the foot of the couch in an attitude of adoration. Subhadra sits in meditation under the couch.

But it is perhaps for its Hadda collection that the Kabul Museum is world-famous. It should be recalled that Hadda was one of the most sacred

spots of the Buddhist world between the second and seventh centuries A. D. The pieces are fashioned in a highly developed stucco technique imbibed from Alexandria, but show also the mingling of Greek and Indian elements, classic profiles, Corinthian capitals, finely chiselled features of Greek art, along with the fulness of form and elaborate clothing of Indian art. The Hadda sculptures are skilfully composed and animated on account of the malleable nature of the stucco medium itself. But the most significant aspect of these pieces is the hair — more like a wig or cap fitted on top of the head, giving the impression of a highly stylized art

form. Unfortunately only 28 of the vast collection of 1,775 Hadda pieces are on display.

Exhibits in the **Bamyan Room** on the other hand, are significant for their use of mystic diagrams which were later to become an essential part of esoteric Buddhism as practised in Nepal and Tibet. The large fresco here of a seated Buddha encircled by 11 smaller Buddhas is typical. The group of Buddhas represents the miraculous emanations from the central Buddha and the mystic diagrams are representative of Vedic conceptions of the cosmos. According to scholars these specimens are the earliest known specimens of mandalas. Also in the Bamyan Room are relics of the famous Hindu Shahi dynasty that ruled Kabul and its environs till the end of the 10th century A. D. — marble sculptures of Surya the Sun God, Shiva and Durga heads, all in the ornate tradition of Indian art.

In contrast with these religious themes, the **Begram Room** presents a rich variety of lay artefacts that reveal the brisk commercial activity along the Silk Route under the Kushans. From Begram were unearthed Chinese lacquer ware, Greek bronzes and ancient glass from Alexandria. Glass vases with faceted hexagons on display here relate to a style prevalent in Pompeii, while a large plaster medallion with the winged Eros holding the Greek goddess Psyche in the shape of a butterfly is a common Greek motif. But the ivory collection from Begram is truly priceless. Dating from the first to third centuries



A decorated pistol



A. D., these are said to be among the best collection of ancient ivories in the world.

In a different mould entirely are the exhibits in the **Islamic Room**, portraying the most indigenous period of Afghan history. Most objects on display relate to the 11th and 12th centuries, when Afghanistan was the seat of the powerful Ghaznevid and Ghorid dynasties, a period that saw the efflorescence of Islam. And each winter, Muslim armies would pour through the mountain passes into India, to return with loot and treasures that were used to adorn the palaces at Ghazni, Bost and Lashkari Bazaar. In the central case of the hall are Ghaznevid ceramics engraved in Kufic script, glazed ceramic tiles and a variety of bronze and silverware — ewers, jars, bowls. The mural paintings from the palace hall at Lashkari Bazaar are still rich in colour and detail, representing Islamic art at its peak. Then in the early 13th century came Ghenghiz Khan and his marauding hordes, destroying and killing everything in sight. Entire cities and civilizations were razed to the ground, anarchy prevailed, and the land lay broken and useless. Nothing at all survives from that tragic time, but Islamic culture was to revive once again in the 15th century under the Timurid kings, when Behzad produced some of the finest miniature paintings in the world. These are on separate display at the National Archives. Other artefacts relating to this period are also exhibited at the Ethnographic Museum. It is proposed to establish a separate Islamic Museum where all these artefacts will be under a single roof. This will also relieve the present pressure on the museum and allow to display more of the objects relating to other periods.

The museum also has a vast collec-

tion of coins. These also are representative of Afghanistan's varied past — from the Indo-Greek period till the present. The Kushan coins minted by Kanishka are particularly significant because they present a variety of deities — Greek, Persian, Central Asian and Hindu. Notable among the coins of the Islamic period are the Ghaznevid coins, and those of modern Afghanistan beginning from coins of Ahmad Shah Durrani to the 20th century. The five Afghani note issued by King Amanullah is of interest as Afghanistan's first paper currency.

The present museum is the result of painstaking research, compilation and analyses. The museum also has a separate wing for the restoration of artefacts and regular training schemes for its staff. Shortage of space, equipment and trained staff are no doubt great handicaps at present, but these can be surmounted in time. What is present in abundant measure — and most vital of all — is the collective consciousness and will of the people, the desire to cherish and preserve the past for the benefit of the future.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan in earlier years, was a free-for-all area for the depredations of interested foreigners, just as many other Asian countries were. Charles Mason, an official of the British East India Company, who conducted years of archaeological research in this country, has recorded in his autobiography that he shipped 33,000 artefacts from the Begram site alone back to England! In 1922 the government banned individual expeditions, and passed enactment ensuring that all archaeological finds would henceforth be handed over to the museum. This has helped in retaining the excavations of subsequent Afghan, French, Soviet and Japanese teams.

Not that efforts by anti-social elements to smuggle antiques out of Afghanistan have been lacking. Only recently a container of valuable objects was detected on the Soviet border en route to West Germany. These and other such confiscated items are on display at the **Confiscated Goods Hall** of the museum — a grim reminder of the threat that will always exist to valuable works of art. However, with increased vigilance on the part of the authorities, such cases are on the decline.

In order to foster national pride and awareness, the museum authorities are now trying to bring this rich heritage to the people. Students in particular are encouraged; and the number of visitors to the museum has registered an increase in recent months. A scheme for training more guides is also under way.

The National Museum has come a long way from the early days when it was first established in a small building at Bagh-i-Bala (Upper Garden), overlooking Kabul. Exhibits consisted mainly of manuscripts, weapons and flags belonging to various rulers. Over the years the original collection has been greatly enlarged by the continuing endeavours of various Afghan and foreign archaeological missions. Today the museum spans 50 millenniums — prehistoric, classical, Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic — and stands as one of the greatest testimonies of antiquity that the world has inherited.

And so the museum continues to grow. Last year, the ethnographic wing was moved to a separate premises in order to encourage fuller growth in that field, for which there is much scope in Afghanistan. The proposed Islamic Museum will be another step towards diversification and expansion.

R. R.

(Continued from p. 27)

spade stands bending a little over the ground. A sower with grain in the basket throws his hand back. A worker carries heavy boards on his back, and a vendor with a basket of fruit on his head, cheese in large leather bags, and several such figures. The artist carves them as if narrating their lives, and feeling compassion for their lot — bent backs, tired faces, blistered hands, feet heavily stepping on the ground.

Then he brings in and, finding for each one a proper place on the table, places two orchestras, as if competing with each other, and in between them — a dancer. How different they are, these musicians, — sad, gay, sly, completely absorbed in their music.

Eshaq has created a lot of sculptures of women: mothers, surrounded by

children, with children in their arms and laps, with tender faces and affectionate hands. All this goes to show how deeply he loves his mother who has given birth to many children and, through her, he knows dozens of Afghan mothers.

He has also made a special series of sculptures devoted to Nooristan. This series in ebony is striking. Whether idols, or ancient pagan gods, sages or folk tale narrators — they are enigmatic, mysterious and attractive at the same time. It is difficult to tear oneself from them. As could not the 14-year-old boy, who first saw them in the shop-window of an antique shop on that rainy day.

In Afghanistan the opinion of religious dignitaries plays a significant role for deciding the destiny of an artist. When his exhibition devoted to

the fifth anniversary of the National Front of the Republic of Afghanistan was visited by a large group of mullahs and ulema, he thought that they would castigate and condemn him. But today even ministers of religion have changed in Afghanistan. Unhurriedly, they went from work to work, for long examining each one, sometimes exchanging a few enthusiastic words. It was obvious that they liked the sculptures, and they wished to get acquainted with the maker. They asked him questions about his family, his students and wished him further success in his work for the sake of people.

Twenty-three-year-old Mohammad Eshaq, an artist and a teacher, dreams of sculpture becoming popular in his country and understood by every man in Afghanistan.

Life Dedicated to Art



# AFGHAN CINEMA:

## PAST AND PRESENT

Crossing the sidewalks of Pul-e-Bagh-e-Omomi, the centre and crossroads of Mirwais Maidan and Chaman, we come across crowds of young people who are eagerly watching film posters displayed in special showcases. Previously, showcases were dominated by posters of Indian, Iranian and European films, but now Afghan feature films have occupied an important place there. *Stranger* (colour, 35 mm), *Escape*, *The Criminals* and *Migratory Birds*, Afghan full-length feature films have become very popular with Afghan youth and cinema fans as a whole. They are made in the studios of Afghan Film Organization.

Afghanistan did not have cinema culture at all till 1951 when *Love and Friendship*, the first Afghan picture, was shot. The screenplay was written by the late Ustad Rashid Latifi and the film starred Ustad Bina and Latif Nashad Malek Khel. This film was processed in the Huma Film Studios of Lahore. Soon it became very popular with the public. Nevertheless, after this film cinema was again silenced for the following two decades until *Like an Eagle*, the second picture, broke the silence for good.

By 1972, when the well-equipped building of Afghan Film Organization was completed, film culture spread throughout the country. Soon after

this, *Friday Night*, *The Sutor* and *The Smugglers* have been shot. Later, private cinema industries like Nazir Films, Shafaq Films, Qais Films and Aparcin Films emerged. These studios started producing feature films, *Rozgaran* and *Rabia Balkhi* being the most popular among them.

Film-makers and film critics believe that the Afghan film industry was rehabilitated after the victory of the April Revolution when it emerged also on the international scene. During the years of the revolution, a dozen of full-length colour feature films, tens of telefilms and hundreds of documentaries and short films have been produced by Afghan film-makers.



A still from  
*Sabour-e-  
Sarbaz*



kers, and screened throughout the country.

At present, Afghan Film Organization and private studios are busy shooting *The Earth, Besieged, The Last Hope, Plunderers*, and *Stars Never Die*. A spokesman of Afghan cinema reported that the shootings of most of these films are now coming to an end.

Afghan feature films have won both national and international acclaim. They have also aroused interest in world film market. A few Afghan feature films have been purchased by the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and some other countries.

*Saboor, the Soldier* at the Moscow International Forum, *Escape* at the Tashkent Film Festival, *The Moments* at the Varna Festival and *Migratory Birds* at the 15th International Film Forum in Moscow have won medals, prizes and certificates. This shows the tireless efforts and love of Afghan film-makers to their commitment. They have produced outstanding films, despite wide-ranging problems faced by young Afghan film-makers.

Sometimes it is even dangerous to shoot a film. Eng. Latif, a famous director of Afghan Film says. "Once when we were going to the location of one of my films we faced an offensive by the counter-revolutionaries. The crew, including myself, had to pick up weapons. We laid down for a while cameras and fought for weeks. We started shooting after we had defeated the enemy." Such instances are not few.

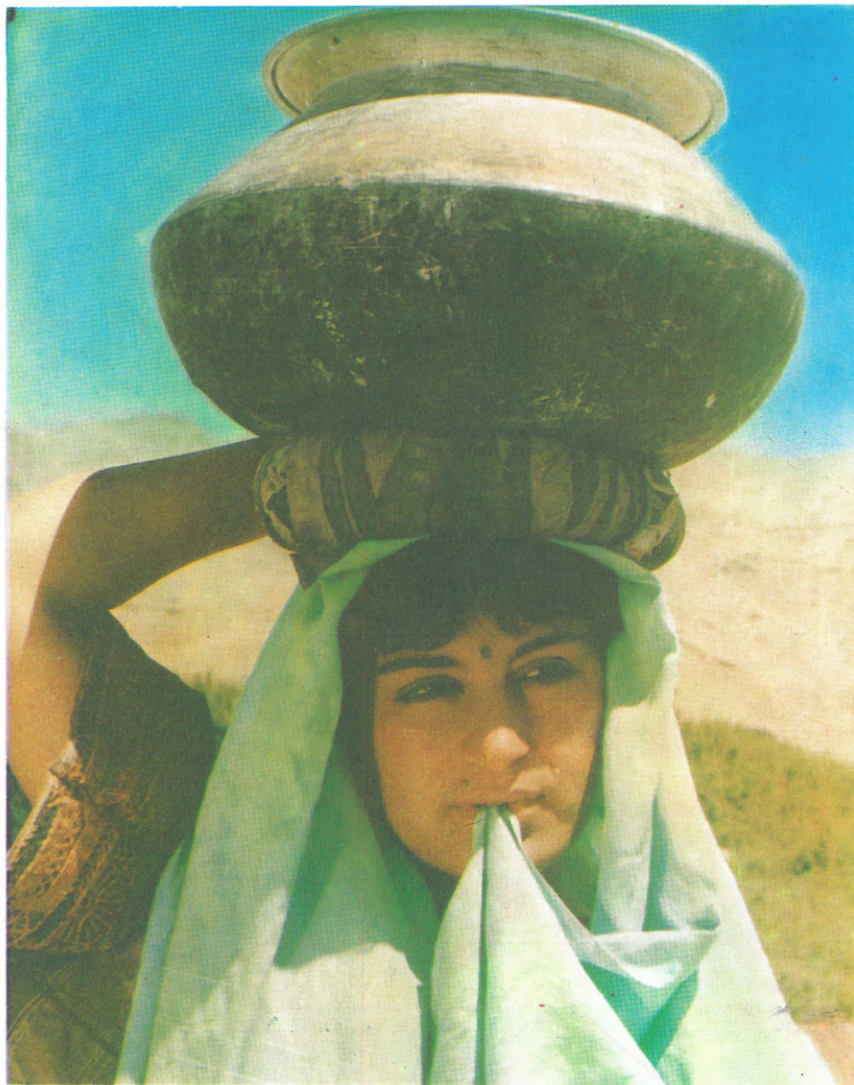
Afghan Film Organization, so far, could not decorate a building or a small village appropriately for a film due to the financial problems. Afghan young cinema still suffers from lack of up-to-date and well-equipped studios, scarcity of laboratories for colour pictures as well as lack of professional actors and directors and tens of other shortcomings. But with all this, Afghan film-makers brought into being praiseworthy ventures.

Eng. Latif, Said Workzai and Faqir Nabi are outstanding directors who have produced some of our best feature films. Their works have depicted the most heartening problems of the country and every-day life of its people.

Afghan cinema ultimately found its way to progress after passing of its chequered history. It will prove itself further in the future on the international scene.

Afghan Film Organization intends to set up new studios and build new up-to-date laboratories for shooting and processing full-length feature films.

By Z. Razban



Adela Adim, a popular actress



Famous actor Salam Sangi at the shooting site



